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LITERACY IN COMPOSITION STUDIES

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LiCS MISSION STATEMENT

Literacy in Composition Studies is a refereed open access online journal that sponsors scholarly activity at the nexus of Literacy and Composition Studies. We foreground *literacy* and *composition* as our keywords because they do particular kinds of work. We want to retain Composition's complicated history as well as FYC's institutional location and articulation to secondary education. Through literacy, we denote practices that are both deeply context-bound and always ideological. Literacy and Composition are therefore contested terms that often mark where the struggles to define literate subjects and confer literacy's value are enacted. We are committed to publishing scholarship that explores literacy at its intersection with Composition's history, pedagogies, and interdisciplinary methods of inquiry.

Literacy is a fluid and contextual term. It can name a range of activities from fundamental knowledge about how to decode text to interpretive and communicative acts. Literacies are linked to know-how, to insider knowledge, and literacy is often a metaphor for the ability to navigate systems, cultures, and situations. At its heart, literacy is linked to interpretation—to reading the social environment and engaging and remaking that environment through communication. Orienting a Composition Studies journal around literacy prompts us to investigate the ways that writing is interpretive as well as persuasive; to analyze the connections and disconnections between writing and reading; and to examine the ways in which literacy acts on or constitutes the writer even as the writer seeks to act on or with others.

LiCS seeks submissions that interpret literacy at a time of radical transformation in its contexts and circulation. We are open to a wide range of research that takes up these issues, and we are especially interested in work that:

- provides provisional frameworks for theorizing literacy activities
- analyzes how literacy practices construct student, community, and other identities
- investigates the ways in which social, political, economic, and technological transformations produce, eliminate, or mediate literacy opportunities
- analyzes the processes whereby literacies are valued or legitimated
- examines the literacies sponsored through college writing courses and curricula, including the range of literate activities, practices, and pedagogies that shape and inform, enable and constrain writing
- considers the implications of institutional, state, or national policies on literacy learning and teaching, including the articulation of high schools and higher education
- proposes or creates opportunities for new interactions between Literacy and Composition Studies, especially those drawing on transnational and cross-cultural literacy research

Editors' Introduction to the Third Issue

This March 2014 issue of *LiCS* marks the journal's one-year anniversary. We started the journal out of a desire to foster connections among scholars working on concomitant questions, across national borders, and between data or fieldwork and theory. Appropriately, the need for connections and the problems of disconnections run throughout this current issue. The articles in this issue all respond in some way to the question Janine Solberg asks in "Taking Shorthand for Literacy": "why do we value some literacies more than others?" The ways the writers in this issue answer this question suggest new sites for literacy research and new possibilities for composition teaching.

In the lead article, Solberg takes seriously the literate work of a group of women writers who have been overlooked by literacy historians: stenographers. Solberg explains how composition's master narratives about systems management and Taylorism function as "deskilling narratives" that divorce hand from head. In her analysis of instructional material for the "business girl," Solberg reveals the ways stenographers act as literacy workers who were "encouraged to think of content, context, and purpose, and to use [their] position as a means of learning about the business and its language" (19). Her article challenges us to recognize that such narratives have obscured the ways stenographers might operate "as literate subjects or active participants in larger flows of information" (13). Solberg's essay is a corrective to the bias in our field against work deemed mechanical or not progressive enough in its politics--a bias that is, as Solberg points out, itself mechanical.

In our second article, "'Like signposts on the road': The Function of Literacy in Constructing Black Queer Ancestors," Eric Darnell Pritchard works with multiple facets of connection and disconnection to investigate the ways Black LGBTQ people have used literacy to connect with ancestors to "engender Black queer identity formation and affirmation, create genealogical links, and preserve cultural traditions" (5). Pritchard works with data collected from sixty Black LGBTQ interview subjects. By working at the intersections of race and sexuality/gender, Pritchard explores how these individuals developed literacy practices allowing them to transcend the "historical erasure" of people who are both racialized and queered others. Pritchard asks us to imagine how we might revise our approach to teaching writing by attending to the "relationships between literacy, ancestors, and the relics of history" (35).

In our third article, "Literacy Brokers and the Emotional Work of Mediation," Ligia Ana Mihut also challenges us to recognize the ways people use literacy to create significant emotional connections outside institutional sites. In her ethnographic study of the role of literacy brokers working with Romanian immigrants to the United States, Mihut uncovers what she calls "literacy as affinity—a discursive repertoire comprised of language or empathy, personal experiences, and even social relations embedded in the literate experience" (2). Mihut's essay demonstrates the usefulness of studying the concept of the literacy broker as distinct from the well-worn category of the literacy sponsor. Because literacy brokers "work across difference in languages, cultures, and socio-political

systems and structures," analyzing the "concept of the literacy broker affords a significant analytical lens into questions of access and communication across borders, engaging differentially situated subjects" (29). Mihut demonstrates that the literacy brokers she studies develop a bi-institutional perspective that allows them to negotiate and critique institutions. This dual perspective reflects and reinforces the emotional labor brokers undertake as part of their literacy work.

Two book reviews round out this issue. Connie Kendall Theado reviews Scott Wible's 2014 CCCC Advancement of Knowledge Award-winning monograph, *Shaping Language Policy in the U.S.: The Role of Composition Studies*, arguing that its analysis of policy demonstrates how the fields of composition and literacy studies can productively engage with one another. Gwen Gorzelsky also considers how composition shapes literacy learning in her review of *New Literacy Narratives from an Urban University: Analyzing Stories About Reading, Writing, and Changing Technologies*, authored by Sally Chandler and five student co-authors: Angela Castillo, Maureen Kadash, Molly D. Kenner, Lorena Ramirez, and Ryan J. Valdez. In documenting how each student co-author contributes to the volume via participatory action research, Gorzelsky suggests the book enacts the complex literacy pedagogies called for in *LiCS*'s opening issue symposium.

At our one-year mark, we are excited to present this rich array of scholarship to our readers. This milestone reminds us of the debt of gratitude we owe to our writers, our readers, our Editorial Board, and our Editorial Associates. We appreciate this continued engagement, and as always we hope readers will continue the conversation by contributing to our ongoing Symposium.

Brenda Glascott, *California State University, San Bernardino*
Justin Lewis, *Western Oregon University*
Tara Lockhart, *San Francisco State University*
Holly Middleton, *High Point University*
Juli Parrish, *University of Denver*
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Taking Shorthand for Literacy: Historicizing the Literate Activity of US Women in the Early Twentieth-Century Office

Janine Solberg University of Massachusetts, Amherst

ABSTRACT

In this essay, I argue that neglect in literacy studies of the early twentieth-century office as a site of women's literate labor has been reinforced by two commonplaces about clerical work: first, that clerical work was routinized and deskilled after the turn of the century (and, consequently, became "women's work"), and second, that the labor of writing was split into the "head" work of male executives and the "hand" work of female clerical workers. Focusing on the figure of the early twentieth-century female stenographer, I identify some of the problems with these two commonplaces and urge literacy scholars to recover the labor of clerical workers in their histories. The essay concludes with a brief discussion of the diary of a stenographer named Irene Chapin, who lived and worked in Western Massachusetts in the late 1920s.

KEYWORDS

clerical work, literacy, stenographers, shorthand, deskilling, diaries, women, writing

Whenever people have learned that my research relates to the history of clerical work, it has been remarkable how quickly and spontaneously they have offered up personal connections and stories: anecdotes about a mother, grandmother, or aunt who supported the family by working as a stenographer or secretary, memories of summers spent working for a temp agency during college or graduate school. Given the power and prevalence of such stories, the overall lack of historical attention paid to clerical work as a site of women's literate activity is striking. Certainly, the cultural impact of clerical work, constructed as *women's* work, has been profound. In 1880, the number of women in clerical jobs stood at 6,600; by 1920, that figure had risen to well over a million (1,396,000), and in the next decade it would jump yet again to reach nearly two million, with women making up more than fifty percent of all clerical workers (Kwolek-Folland 4). During that same period of growth, the female clerical worker (or "business

girl") would show up in fiction, film, newspapers, and magazines—becoming one of the most visible figures in popular culture to link women with literate labor and modern technologies for writing.

The fact that so prominent a site of women's literate activity as clerical work has garnered so little attention from literacy historians[1] bears pausing over, particularly given the steady proliferation of historical work that has emerged within the field of composition and rhetoric, much of it directed toward the study and recovery of US women's literate and rhetorical practices (Royster, Gere, Enoch, Hollis, Johnson, Kates, and Sharer, to name just a few). While this scholarship has grown to encompass both curricular and extracurricular sites of literacy, the office has thus far failed to attract much attention as a scene for the production of "usable" histories of literacy. Why might this be? And what might this neglect, or omission, tell us about the terministic screens at work on our ideas about which kinds of writers and writing count as worth recovering? Why do we seem to value some literacies more than others?

The reasons that clerical work remains well to the margins of composition histories are various and not easily untangled, and I can only hope to offer a piece of that larger explanation here. But the question merits attention, given the reach and scale of clerical work as a shaping influence on writing instruction, women's employment prospects, and indeed the ways that conceptions of clerical work and the clerical worker as a feminine stereotype have served at times to classify, contain, and dismiss women's literate and intellectual labor.[2] Certainly notions of writing as "women's work" were not limited to the business office. The influx of women into the office, beginning in the last decades of the nineteenth century, occurred at the same time that the first year composition course was emerging and writing instruction was coming to be feminized, both in status and staffing. As Deborah Brandt, Richard Ohmann, David Russell, Donna Strickland, and others have shown, the growth and transformation of business in the US has not been separate from the business of writing instruction.[3]

A story commonly told about the early twentieth-century corporation is one that emphasizes a relentless drive toward efficiency through systems management, division of labor, and mechanization. As a historical lens, this story has been used to advance valid critiques of both business and education. However, I want to suggest that the dominance of this narrative has made it difficult to see clerical workers as anything but victims of (or cogs within) an impersonal and exploitative machine—except, perhaps, to see them as white-collar workers and, thus, obedient beneficiaries of race and class privilege, set apart from the political struggles of their working-class sisters and brothers in the labor movement. Neither of these images (the victimized cog or the obedient worker of privilege) presents itself as likely candidate for recovery. The "everyday" literacies of clerical workers do not seem to offer up the sorts of narratives of writerly agency and political resistance—what might be termed "activist literacies"—that we tend to privilege and celebrate in our histories. Despite warnings against studying only those figures whose politics seem to align with our own present-day values and identifications (Mattingly 100-03; Sutherland 16, 27-29) and critiques of dichotomous hero/villain narratives (Paine xi, 34-35), business is always subject to suspicion.

In this essay, I argue that composition and rhetoric scholars' continued neglect of women's

literate labor in the early twentieth-century office has been reinforced by two commonplaces that dominate our thinking about that labor: first, the understanding that clerical work was routinized and deskilled after the turn of the century (and, consequently, became "women's work"), and second, that the labor of writing was split into the "head" work of male executives and the "hand" work of female clerical workers. Both of these commonplaces grow out of prominent discourses of this period and reflect an impulse to devalue the material tools and bodily labor of writing, which in the context of clerical work have routinely been coded as both feminine and "mechanical." The stereotype of a feminine body as a circuit that merely reproduces the words and ideas of others assumes and perpetuates a simplified notion of literacy, writers, and writing technologies that is out of step with current scholarship in literacy and composition. If clerical workers and their literacies are to be brought more squarely within the historical purview of composition and rhetoric, and if we are to chip away at the persistent binaries that continue to frame clerical work, then we must acknowledge the limitations of these commonplaces—particularly insofar as they overshadow and obscure individual experiences within wider economies of literacy.

In what follows, I unpack some of the problems in the two commonplaces described above by focusing on one particular type of clerical worker from the early twentieth century—the female stenographer. Often considered to be a more "mechanical" class of worker than the secretary, the stenographer would seem to present the less compelling site for an examination or recovery of workplace literacies, and it is partly for this reason that I choose her.[4] There are at least three senses in which the stenographer's work might be considered "mechanical": (1) such work frequently involved mechanical devices such as typewriters and dictation machines; (2) in order to keep up with spoken dictation, the stenographer was expected to have mastered a shorthand system well enough to type and to convert speech to shorthand symbols more or less "mechanically" (that is to say, automatically: quickly, accurately, and with a minimum of conscious thought); (3) in transcribing dictation, the stenographer was expected to enact and ensure "mechanical correctness," extending to spelling, punctuation, capitalization, grammar, and paragraphing, as well as the overall neatness and formatting of the page (evenly striking the keys for uniform darkness, anticipating how long the document would be so as to ensure its fit and placement on the page, and so on).

By considering the figure of the early twentieth-century stenographer in a more nuanced way, I hope to upend some of the mechanical biases that have persisted around clerical work and thereby served as obstacles to the recognition and study of clerical work as *literate* work. One aim of this essay, then, is to help clear the way for historical recovery of early twentieth-century women's literacies in the office and related settings. In the concluding section of this essay, I draw from the diaries of a real-life stenographer named Irene Chapin, whose written entries (1926-1928) provide a useful counterpoint to representations of the stenographer as a human machine and suggest some of the ways that clerical literacies migrated beyond the office door.

DESKILLING THE OFFICE WORKER

Readers of this essay have likely encountered an image like the following at some point: a black and white photograph that shows women at work in a large room, seated behind desks neatly arranged in long rows, perhaps positioned at typewriters or adding machines.[5] Like so many symbol-using cogs, they churned out information that helped lubricate the workings of burgeoning corporate machines. Such images have functioned as a kind of visual shorthand for the now-familiar story of how clerical work came to be gendered and deskilled, a story that usually goes something like this: in keeping with the new scale of growing corporations and a drive toward efficiency, Taylorites and other efficiency experts re-imagined the nineteenth-century office by breaking work down into smaller component tasks that required only limited skill or thought. These scientifically-minded men and women sought to identify the "one best way"[6] to accomplish a given task, with "best" often measured in terms of speed, efficiency, and output—rather than, say, workers' satisfaction or understanding of the larger production process. The assembly line is perhaps the best known and most vivid example of this impulse to "scientifically manage" work, as Charlie Chaplin memorably demonstrated in the 1936 film *Modern Times*, by showing how the pace of work could be set to machine speed. Some clerical workers, particularly those classified as "machine operatives," complained that they felt like factory workers (Strom 246). Yet, as much as the assembly line has come to symbolize routinization and deskilling, it can be a misleading metaphor for evaluating the literate labor of the clerical worker. Scientific management may have brought similar values to both the factory and the office, but the outcomes varied, and not all forms of office work proved equally conducive to the use of such techniques. Stenography and secretarial work, in particular, seem to have been more resistant to being scientifically managed.[7] Written correspondence entailed more variability than a manufactured widget, and the time it took to record a dictated letter depended as much upon the efforts and work habits of the dictator as it did upon the shorthand skills of the stenographer.

> ***"The 'everyday' literacies of clerical workers do not seem to offer up the sorts of narratives of writerly agency and political resistance—what might be called 'activist literacies'—that we tend to privilege and celebrate in our histories."***

Well into the 1970s, many scholars held that the type of deskilling associated with the factory had also occurred in the office (Cohn 65). It seemed apparent that by the first part of the twentieth century the role of the clerk had been transformed and degraded—a result of the rapid growth and mechanization of business. Rather than apprentices who would, over time, move into managerial positions, the male clerk of the eighteenth or early nineteenth century would be displaced by the (usually) female worker who toiled with little autonomy in a large and impersonal corporation. Harry Braverman's influential *Labor and Monopoly Capital* describes bookkeepers in pre-industrial

America as "master craftsmen" (299) who would come to be replaced, along with their clerk apprentices, by semi-skilled machine operators overseen by a smaller group of office managers. This deskilling narrative had the advantage of allowing scholars to group clerical workers together with factory workers, understanding both groups to be similarly alienated from their labor. It also offered a possible explanation for sex segregation in offices: as certain types of work were deskilled and degraded through mechanization and rationalization, those positions would have become less appealing to men and their (masculine) skilled labor less necessary.

Yet, it is not clear that office work after 1900 did, in fact, require less skill than it had throughout the previous century. There is no question that offices underwent a significant transformation in the period between 1870 and 1930, or that scientific management and mechanization left their mark on the office, but the speed and enthusiasm with which these new methods were adopted varied considerably. As historian Lisa Fine points out, "Only the largest companies had the need and the resources to adopt these rationalized methods of white-collar work" (171); even as late as 1930, "many firms remained relatively untouched by scientific management," despite its undeniable influence (Davies, *Woman's Place* 107). Just as the adoption of rationalized methods for office work was uneven, so too was the impact on workers' skills. Samuel Cohn, in his book-length study of occupational sex-typing, questions the extent to which clerical work was deskilled. He notes that some of the new office technologies helped to speed up repetitive tasks requiring less skill (licking stamps, copying documents, and addressing envelopes, for instance), and so may have actually eliminated positions that had formerly employed unskilled workers (84, 86). By contrast, other devices required the development of new skills. The typewriter, for example, required wholly different motor skills than did penmanship; clerical workers who used typewriters also typically learned to clean and maintain their machines, sometimes even making basic repairs (89). In sum, clerical work in the early twentieth century seems for many workers to have required about the same and sometimes more skill than it did for their nineteenth-century counterparts (Cohn 66, 89-90).

As this brief history illustrates, certain familiar narratives about clerical deskilling oversimplify and thus elide the nuances of literate labor. In the rest of this section, I suggest that such oversimplifications are not innocent but gendered; they position female workers differently from their male counterparts in this history of the office. When we situate women within a more nuanced history of clerical work, it is possible to see how the stenographer as a literate subject becomes ideologically overdetermined as lacking in skill, as non-intellectual—thus positioning literate activities associated with that subject as feminine and thus not deserving of status, pay, or scholarly attention.

The very concept of deskilling implies that we can compare levels of literate skill across contexts and time periods. Such assessments are tricky, in part because of how conceptions of literate skill are bound up with factors like economic value and scarcity (Brandt, Literacy 1-2), tacit or naturalized cultural knowledge, and judgments about the possessors of the skills in question (as grounded in social status or other identity categories, for example). As feminist historians of technology have

argued, beliefs about gender have shaped and been shaped by societal beliefs about skill and technology (Lerman, Oldenziel, and Mohun 2-3, 5-7). We see this shaping at work in comparisons that contrast the purportedly eroded skill of the early twentieth-century (female) clerical worker against that of the nineteenth-century (male) clerk. Such comparisons often have relied upon romanticized images of the latter that gloss over the challenges many men faced in finding work that was satisfying and remunerative (Cohn 67; Srole 18-21). The nineteenth-century clerk has been depicted as an apprentice who, under the guidance of a paternalistic employer, amassed increasingly more skill over time; once trained, he was expected to ascend into a management position, launch his own business, or perhaps marry the boss's daughter. While some clerks did obtain such success, the happy narrative of the self-made man hardly reflected the experiences of all. The term "clerk" was a generic one, equally likely to be applied to the man working as a copyist as to the young businessman on the rise.[8]

Already by the mid-nineteenth century, before women or typewriters had entered the office, the clerk's relationship to his employer was becoming more impersonal, and fewer clerks were finding opportunities to become proprietors (Srole 21). Some clerks were hired to do copying only on a temporary basis, similar to modern day "temp" workers (Cohn 67), and even permanent workers might never manage to advance beyond the position of a low- or mid-level clerk, particularly those who came from working-class backgrounds (Davies, "Feminization" 4-5). As a result, a clerk's status could be liminal and uncertain, and men who remained in clerking positions for too long might feel their masculinity called into question.

Rather than experiencing a uniform loss of skill and autonomy, clerical workers in the late-nineteenth- and early twentieth-century office were subject to, and participants in, a more complicated restructuring. This involved a deskilling process that was rhetorical as well as technological. Differences in skill, education, and status among office workers were reflected in workplace hierarchies that incorporated separate tracks and job titles for men and women. Even within the comparatively truncated women's "track," workers were organized into different classes—from file clerk and typist at the lower end, stenographer in the middle, and private secretary or female office manager at the upper end. According to Strom, "the division of workers into different categories of class and status—was as acute in office work and among women workers as it was in the workplace at large" (4). Yet, despite these distinctions, twentieth-century labor economists for a long time failed to discern much difference among female clerical workers, treating them as "[a]pparent victims of an all-encompassing women's labor market principle" and "an amorphous group characterized by nothing but their gender" (Strom 4). One way that skill has therefore been obscured or erased has been through a tendency to group all clerical workers together: viewing them as interchangeable and eliding distinctions in the nature of their work.

An example of this tendency to lump clerical workers together can be seen in the habit of imagining them, first and foremost, as operators of office equipment—as button pushers or machine operatives. The similarities shared by the adding machine and typewriter's physical form and mechanism of

operation (a metal box with keys to press) invite this sort of grouping, as does the proliferation of office devices during the early twentieth century (see Leffingwell's hefty 1926 *Office Appliance Manual*, for example). But to adopt such a view is to obscure the different types of symbolic work and tacit knowledge associated with each machine and its use in different work contexts. Calculating machines had mathematical rules built into their operations, for example, whereas typewriter manufacturers did not incorporate similar rules for language usage into their machines. The adoption of writing technologies such as typewriters and shorthand systems, while speeding up the production of written texts, "may not have threatened the traditional stenographer or secretarial worker with either the loss of a job or job-deskilling, and may, in fact, have made him or her more indispensable to an employer" (Strom 185). By contrast, "[a]dding machines had more ominous possibilities for bookkeepers, who held relatively prestigious positions in traditional offices" and therefore "had far more to lose than copyists as both mechanization and rationalization set in" (Strom 185; see also Cohn 89).[9] Despite differences in the ways that mechanization affected different types of clerical workers, references to clerical work's history are often painted with the same broad brush, with little to say about the domain knowledge workers acquired on the job or the literacy skills that were necessary and, increasingly, assumed. Such treatments amount to a kind of deskilling by omission.

"When we situate women within a more nuanced history of clerical work, it is possible to see how the stenographer as a literate subject becomes ideologically overdetermined as lacking in skill, as non-intellectual—thus positioning literate activities associated with that subject as feminine and thus not deserving of status, pay, or scholarly attention."

A more deliberate type of rhetorical deskilling came about through the efforts of male stenographers who, concerned about losing status, sought to shore up and protect their professional (masculine) identities. Prior to the invention of the typewriter, men had had a near monopoly on stenographic work. At the end of the nineteenth century, however, women were rapidly making inroads into stenography. First trained as typists, it wasn't long before they began learning shorthand as a complementary skill. It quickly became clear that combining typing ability with stenographic skills was the new "killer app" of clerical work, and women's incursion into typing and stenography was rapid and pronounced. By 1900, women held seventy-seven percent of all typing and stenography jobs in the US, and by 1920 that number had jumped to ninety percent (Lupton 43). In response to this feminine threat, a growing perception of stenography as "mechanical," and out of concern for the quality of stenographic instruction offered by a growing number of commercial schools, some male stenographers sought to brand certain types of stenographic work as particularly demanding of "masculine" qualities. They argued that court reporting (legal stenography) in particular demanded physical stamina, memory, and intelligence, and that the nature of statements made in the courtroom would shock and upset the sensibility of any modest, self-respecting woman (Srole 145). Seeking to

cement their status as professionals, male stenographers presented business stenography—an area in which women were beginning to dominate—as a weaker and less professional type of work (Srole 127).[10] Images that showed women using office machines, along with a tendency to assign more tedious or repetitive office jobs to women, further contributed to perceptions of women's work in offices as more mechanical than intellectual.

It goes without saying that the word "mechanical" has negative connotations for composition and rhetoric scholars. The phrase "mechanical correctness" evokes at once a problematic pedagogy, the unthinking application of rules for writing, and images of student papers besprinkled with red ink from Miss Grundy's pen (Connors 112). These are associations from which the field has tried to distance itself, though not, perhaps, without cost.[11] The result of this distancing or "anti-mechanic sentiment" (Rice 370) has not only been to transform the way we talk about our work in the writing classroom; it has also informed the kinds of histories we see—or, rather, don't see—as worthy of recovery and study.

Writers or scenes of literate activity that have come to be seen as "mechanical" have been more difficult to recognize as examples of meaningful writing: they seem to present themselves as evacuated of intellect and agency (rhetorical, political, or otherwise). At the end of the nineteenth century, despite myriad social and technological developments that were helping to alter the way writing was being used by workers within and beyond academia, the idea that writing was merely the transcription of spoken language persisted within higher education. Conceived of as "transcribed speech," writing was regarded by many as an elementary skill (Russell 4-5). Russell has suggested that one result of this persistent conception of writing as a mere act of "talking with the pen" was "a conceptual split between 'content' and 'expression,'" mapped onto a binary hierarchy that privileged the former over the latter. This misconceived division was to have, in his words, "profound consequences" for composition as it justified the relegation of writing instruction "to the margins of a course, a curriculum, an institution" (5-7). A similar marginalization—and feminization—was at work in the turn-of-the-century office; there is perhaps no figure that more aptly symbolizes this content/expression split than the (female) stenographer, whose job it was to usher the spoken ideas of others into the form of a written text.

HEAD, HANDS, AND "AUTOMATIC" WRITING IN THE OFFICE

> When men are deprived of the quill and women of the needle, all hands are up for grabs—as employable as employees. Typescript amounts to the desexualization of writing, sacrificing its metaphysics and turning it into word processing. (Kittler 187)

> The connections between authorship and writing became attenuated and obscure when the latter became newly "automatic." (Gitelman 187)

The idea of a form/content split, attributed to the adoption of the typewriter, has worked to obscure alternative discourses that might construct the stenographer's role as active and collaborative rather than one of simple mechanical reproduction. When deskilling narratives reduce women to "hands," they create a terministic screen that prevents us from seeing these workers as literate subjects or active participants in larger flows of information. Mike Rose has argued that we ought to "think more clearly and fairly" about the intelligence of the American worker; I, too, would like to see us "give workers back their heads" (xvii, 145). In order to do this, says Rose, we must be willing to "reimagine and unsettle our prevailing vocabulary of work," particularly those terminologies grounded in "the Western, Cartesian divide between body and mind . . . the opposition of hand to brain" (141). So long as the labor of clerical workers is reduced to the motions of their hands, and their relationship to written texts considered "merely mechanical," it seems likely that the history of that labor will continue to be marginalized within composition and rhetoric.

I began the previous section with an image of women working at rows of desks and the idea of an assembly line. I turn now to a second image: a woman seated at a typewriter, listening through ear tubes or headphones as she transcribes recorded speech into typewritten text. This image of the transcribing typist has been associated with a particular type of deskilling, a gendered division of labor that ostensibly split the act of writing into two parts: conception and production, mental work and manual work. In the quotation that opens this section, Friedrich Kittler suggests that typing symbolically "desexualized" writing, replacing the "phallic" pen with the impersonal typewriter. Yet typing and stenography, as should be obvious by now, were far from unsexed. All hands might have been "up for grabs" as employees, but the workers to whom they belonged were still subject to gendered representations of work that cast the workplace tasks of male executives as "mental" and those of female clerical workers as "manual."

"Dictation, in other words, was experienced by many writers as an interactive activity where the stenographer acted as interlocutor and audience rather than simply a mute human recorder. We might therefore think of dictation and transcription less as a division of labor and more a distribution of labor."

An example of this gendered mapping appears in a 1907 advertisement for an Edison dictation machine, which has been reproduced in JoAnne Yates's widely cited history of business communication, *Control Through Communication*, and more recently in Strickland's *The Managerial Unconscious in the History of Composition Studies.* The ad's slogan, written in bold letters, reads "From Brain to Type" and accompanies an illustration which makes clear that the brain belongs to the male business executive, who is shown using the device to record his dictation. The female stenographer-typist, the ad implies, is merely a set of ears and hands—a physical circuit that receives the dictator's words, thereby linking together the dictation machine and typewriter and producing the type mentioned in the ad's slogan. Similar assumptions about "men's" and "women's" work roles

showed up repeatedly in advertisements for office furniture and supplies as well as office machines. In some ads, images of women were used to suggest that a device was easy to operate or to reaffirm the thinking and decision-making role of a male executive (Kwolek-Folland 72).

Yates seems to take the message advanced by the Edison advertisement more or less at face value; she explains that the typewriter not only offered a means to write more quickly, it also

> opened the way for another change in the procedure by which documents came into being in business establishments: *creation was completely separated from final production*. Before the typewriter, the writer sometimes drafted a document . . . and turned it over to a clerk to copy it out in final form But the almost universal separation of those functions only occurred in conjunction with the typewriter. (42-43, my emphasis)

According to the logic of the Edison advertisement and Yates's description above, the typewriter helped to create a physical and temporal gap between the moment of a text's oral composition and its eventual form as a typewritten document arranged visually on the page. This gap, filled by the typist, marked a division between writing as "creation" versus "production" (Yates 42), or as "conceptual" versus "mechanical" (Strickland 19). In the wishful metaphysics of the Edison marketing department, the female stenotypist is evacuated of mind and agency, a mere receiver (or "medium") for others' words.

Like the larger narrative of deskilling, this image of the stenographer as a set of hands severed from the composing brain is problematic. Yet when it comes to the dictator-stenographer relationship, there still seems to be an impulse and desire to locate a singular "Author" rather than to think of a dictated letter as the product of a collaboration, or to place it within a network of writerly effort distributed through time and across multiple modes and technologies. Such an impulse seems difficult to reconcile with the scholarly work that's been done in recent decades to deconstruct and complicate Enlightenment notions of authorship and to recognize the myriad ways that writing entails collaboration.[12]

I want to continue to put pressure on the idea of the stenographer as a mere "tape recorder" for others' words by considering another device that participated in the symbolic deskilling of the stenographer. If the typewriter seemed to split conception from inscription, then the dictation machine promised to take this division one step further: by eliminating the need for shorthand, devices like the Edison Business Phonograph removed the stenographer from the scene of dictation altogether (Fig. 1). Yet, the dictation machine was never a major agent of deskilling because, as many historians have noted, it never enjoyed the universal adoption that typewriters did (Morton 48-50; Srole 225-26; Cohn 85; Yates 45). It is not difficult to imagine some of the reasons why: a human "recorder" is much more responsive and flexible than a machine, and for many male employees, dictating to a female stenographer would have been a more compelling confirmation of status and masculinity than operating a machine. Although some lower-level clerks were required to use dictation machines, middle- or upper-level managers with clout were more likely to be successful in resisting such requirements (Morton 48).

The preference for a human stenographer wasn't solely a matter of status or convenience, however. Early dictation machines provided what might be described in today's technological parlance as a bad "user experience." One commentator, writing for *The Atlantic* in 1904, observed that

> the failure of the graphophone [as a tool] for composition arises from the unwillingness of a human being to be left behind in a race. The waxen wheel begins to spin; the person dictating must either keep pace with its rapid rotations, or bring it to a standstill. Such a race is not an invitation to careful thought or accurate utterance. (O'Brien 471)

Businessmen simply found the machines difficult to use as a means of composing: "[t]hey could not remember their train of thought or include all of the punctuation without prodding from the stenographer" (Srole 225-26). Dictation, in other words, was experienced by many writers as an interactive activity where the stenographer acted as interlocutor and audience rather than simply a mute human recorder. We might therefore think of dictation and transcription less as a *division* of labor and more a *distribution* of labor. Sometimes this distribution followed sharper delineations (when the written product was more uniform, as with mass mailings, it could be treated more like widget-making), but in other situations the distribution might be messier, and the roles of dictator and scribe more fungible, more apparently a collaboration.

While devices like the Edison Business Phonograph held out a promise of greater efficiency (Fig. 1), it was more often written shorthand—a specialized skill that had to be acquired and cultivated—that remained the predominant literacy technology for taking dictation throughout early twentieth century. As with learning a second language, regular practice with shorthand was important for stenographers wanting to acquire and maintain speed and accuracy, as well as for those wishing to expand their shorthand "vocabularies." Yet, even as dictation machines failed to achieve the popularity and success of other office equipment, the *idea* of the dictation machine nonetheless stuck as an image and a metaphor that has contributed to the "continued perception of business stenographers as machinelike workers who provided no input into the dictation process" (Srole 226). Whereas businesses may have been slow to adopt practices of scientific office management, advertisers for office devices like the dictation machine were far more enthusiastic in embracing rhetorics of efficiency, producing ads that promised speed and convenience for dictator and stenographer alike.

Instructional materials from the early twentieth century, such as textbooks and advice literature for the "business girl," offer a representation of literate activity that is distinctly different from what we find in the Edison marketing campaign. Authors of such materials frequently imagined the diligent student or ambitious stenographer developing increasingly more sophisticated language and writing skills over time that would enable her (or him) to provide correspondingly more editorial input. The most skilled stenographers could aspire to become private secretaries, entrusted with the solo writing of correspondence. A 1919 textbook by Edward Hall Gardner, titled *Constructive Dictation*: *"Plan Your Letter,"* illustrates this progression. I quote at length here to show the rhetorical sensibility and expectation of ongoing literacy learning that characterize the author's remarks:

> You are looking forward to the day when your employer will give you a simple memorandum,

> or a brief note, and will ask you to "write that letter." In other words, you, and not he, will some day write most of his letters.
>
> Consequently you wish to study and to understand each letter you transcribe. Study each unfamiliar word, referring . . . to the glossary and vocabulary in the Appendix, and to a dictionary for other words new to you.
>
> Then ask yourself, "*Do I understand the situation covered by this letter? What result does it aim to accomplish? What impression does it wish to leave, or what action is the reader desired to take?*" As you practice to become a skilled recorder and transcriber of other people's words, determine also to understand the ideas [behind] the letters you take down. You will take dictation more accurately and rapidly if you understand what you are writing. Moreover, when your chance comes, you will be ready to play a more responsible part in the business in which you have a share." (12-13, my emphasis)

The picture that Gardner paints for a stenographer is quite different from that of a passive circuit whose ears and hands dumbly receive the message. Here, the stenographer is encouraged to think of content, context, and purpose, and to use her (or his) position as a means of learning about the business and its language. The stenographer's potential role in the writing process is shown falling along a spectrum: from a more-or-less verbatim transcription to a give-and-take collaboration (with the stenographer providing suggestions, reminders, or information to the dictator), to the autonomous writing of letters. Secretarial manuals and advice in the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s suggest that even "basic" transcription entailed editorial or fact-checking responsibilities, and it was not unusual for authors to advise even lower-level clerical workers like file clerks to learn about the business's operations by reading the documents they handled.

The textbook *English for Secretaries* (1944) underscores the literacy skills considered important for secretarial work, which include "technical knowledge beyond the normal needs of others" and "training in the *transcription* of letters dictated by others" (Nichols x). Such training is important because

> [r]arely does a dictated letter reach the secretary in exactly the form in which it should go out. In the stress of dictation little slips are made by many dictators, and occasionally even big ones by the best of dictators. It is the secretary's job to polish each letter off so that as it goes out it is not only factually accurate and technically correct, but also structurally attractive. Often excellence in this aspect of secretarial work is the most effective means of attracting the notice of executives on whom promotions depend. (Nichols x)

When considered alongside stereotypes of the rationalized office, this textbook commentary evinces a pair of contradictory attitudes toward literacy that thread through the discourses surrounding clerical work. On one hand, "basic" office literacies are assumed, having become nearly invisible against a backdrop of machines and scientific management; on the other hand, an above-average facility with written language and its technologies remained a defining feature of the clerical worker—a quality to be cultivated, particularly by ambitious stenographers and secretaries. Language

ability was represented as a way to distinguish oneself and advance within the hierarchy of office work; discourses encountered by female clerical workers in the first half of the twentieth century thus borrowed from the masculine rhetorics of upward mobility, professionalism, and independence previously associated with the nineteenth-century male clerk-apprentice or stenographer (Srole 9-10). Though there is plenty to critique about these rhetorics, the point remains that women, too, were encouraged to view clerical literacies as a means to success in the workplace.

OFFICE LITERACIES AND THE DIARIES OF A STENOGRAPHER

"My hunch is that the history of women's literacies in the context of clerical work will need to be told through the aggregation of many such smaller stories, rather than through the recovery of a few extraordinary women."

As a category of symbolic activity, clerical work has functioned as a "black box" through which information flows, with stereotypes about that work occluding our view of variations in material and mental labor exerted from one context to another. The result has been to produce a gap in our historical understanding of the office as a scene of women's literate activity. In this final section, I argue for the historical recovery of literacies associated with clerical work. Scholarship of this kind can give us a more textured understanding of literacy practices in the office and help us see how those practices have emerged in response to both local circumstances and wider economies.

Part of the complexity that I'm suggesting we need to recover includes tracing and describing the experiences of individuals who acquired and used workplace literacies. Interviews and oral histories—as represented in Brandt's discussion of Genna May, who worked in the office of a laboratory and with a land title company after the turn of the century (*Literacy* 79), and Liz Rohan's account of her grandmother's work in a typing pool at Sears in the late 1920s—represent valuable means for accomplishing this sort of historical work. These methods become less accessible, however, with the passing of time and the loss of that generation of women. For twenty-first-century researchers, archives and print resources like personal letters and diaries will play an increasingly important role in enabling scholars to gather the details needed to adopt "contextual perspectives" that recognize a *multiplicity* of clerical literacies and attend to their embeddedness within broader systems of activity (Brandt, *Literacy* 3-4). Primary sources, as we shall see, bring new interpretive challenges as well as new insights.

What follows is a discussion based on my analysis of one such resource: the personal diaries of a woman named Irene Chapin (b. April 1, 1901; d. March 25, 1987). At the time the diaries were written, Chapin was in her mid-twenties and living on the family farm with her brothers and widower father. Chapin recorded details of her daily life into three pocket-sized diaries that span the years 1926–28 (Fig. 2), during which time she was employed as a stenographer in the offices of the

Fisk Tire Company (later to become Uniroyal) in Chicopee, Massachusetts. Brief observations about her work are woven in among descriptions of the weather, driving the new "Chevie," outings with friends and family, and other social occasions.

I have compiled a collection of passages that relate specifically to Chapin's office work (Fig. 3); most of these come from her 1926 diary, which chronicles a period of transition as she returned from California to Massachusetts and tried to settle in to her work at Fisk. Chapin's remarks about her work tend to be brief, and I found that by gathering and organizing them chronologically I was able gain a clearer sense of the rhythms of her work at the office. Significantly for my argument, Chapin's descriptions of that work resist simplistic characterization as "merely mechanical." Her work is neither glamorous nor overtly political, but it is not my aim here to produce a "great man" history or add Chapin to a canon; nor is this a "literacy for liberation narrative" (Daniell 399). Rather, it is a single example meant to illustrate the diary as one type of historical artifact that we might work with to begin exploring how clerical literacies were woven into the lives of real women. My hunch is that the history of women's literacies in the context of clerical work will need to be told through the aggregation of many such smaller stories, rather than through the recovery of a few extraordinary women.

Chapin's diary reveals that her work as a stenographer is material and technological, but it is not "mechanical" in the sense of being unthinking or having the uniformity of an assembly line. Instead, Chapin's work days vary in the nature and pace of work, with some space for flexibility and agency. There are several days, for example, when she arranges to leave work early to run errands or chooses to stay late because she doesn't want to leave untranscribed dictation waiting over the weekend. We see that there are busier days and slower days. The latter—which take the form of "lazy" days spent gossiping with a coworker (June 23, 1926) or afternoons spent "loaf[ing]" after a morning of "tedious work" (May 28, 1926)—are exactly the sort of "inefficiency" that dictation machines were supposed to eliminate by ensuring a constant supply of recorded dictation ready to be transcribed. At other times Chapin describes being overwhelmed with work. One Thursday there was so much to be done that she and a dozen of her coworkers "worked until ten o'clock" at night (May 27, 1926), and the following week she would find herself again "'swamped' with dictation" (June 2, 1926). In fact, Chapin writes repeatedly of having "slews of dictation" (she uses that same phrase in at least five separate entries), and elsewhere of being "snowed under" with dictation and other work (Nov. 2, 1926; Oct. 31, 1928).

While Chapin's diary entries don't tell us much about the nature of her stenographic relationship with the business men whose dictation she recorded, we do get a sense that her skills were in demand: after a few months on the job, she complains, "I think some others [in the Steno Dept.] might try dictation once in a while" and asks jokingly, "Whose Steno is she? Tute's or W.H.B.?"—this, during a week when she had been kept busy moving back and forth between the two men (June 11 and 21, 1926). A few months later, Chapin writes that she "[t]ook dictation from JD Anderson V.P., such excitement"; that same week, she also received a two-dollar raise (Aug. 6 and 10, 1926). All of this

indicates that she did her job well and that others recognized her competence. After less than a year on the job, Chapin was moved on a trial basis to the Dealer Promotion Department, where she found the work to be "much more interesting tho' more exacting" (Nov. 1, 1926). There would continue to be ups and downs: a few weeks after being moved to the Promotion Department, Chapin reports being subject to "call downs" (reprimands), noting, "Honestly, me & my bosses just can't seem to please each other" (Dec. 10 and Dec. 13-14, 1926). Despite these challenges, Chapin held on to her job through the next two years—even as other Fisk employees, including V.P. JD Anderson and six members of the Stenographic Department, lost theirs (Sept. 30, 1927).

In *Literacy in American Lives*, Brandt shows how the workplace has been a frequent and often powerful sponsor of literacy. Chapin's diary entries suggest that the office was a site of ongoing literacy learning for her, as well. In particular, we get a sense that Chapin's technological literacies were being further developed through her work at Fisk. She describes using a variety of office technologies, some of which are new to her, including an LC Smith typewriter, which sported "many features which are different an[d] time and energy savers," and a special "long carriage" typewriter with a carriage wide enough to handle blueprints or oversize paper (June 10, 1926; June 29, 1926; Aug. 24, 1926). She also learned to use a hectograph, a means of duplicating documents using special inks and gelatins—a process that Chapin describes as "rather particular work" (June 11, 1926). As Rohan has pointed out, women employed in office jobs have consistently "been required to gain expertise in . . . new technologies to gain, maintain, or better their positions" (240), but this work has rarely been recognized as "technological." Instead, technology has been nearly synonymous with masculinity and men's achievements, though feminist scholars such as Ruth Schwartz Cowan, Judith McGaw, and Autumn Stanley have challenged such gendered assumptions and worked to recover histories of technologies used or invented by women.[13]

"To dismiss the literate activity of clerical workers as purely or primarily 'mechanical' runs counter to current theories of writing, which understand literacy to be situated, material, and distributed—and worthy of study whether used to ends that are dramatic or ordinary, within contexts that are empowering or oppressive."

Given the technologies available in the Fisk offices and its day-to-day fluctuations in workload, it is perhaps not surprising that Chapin's "personal" literacies sometimes crossed over into the space of the workplace. On at least a few occasions, she arrived to work early in order to do typing for family members: a play for her eldest sister Alice, a teacher, and a paper for her younger brother Kenneth, a student (Jan. 16, 1928; Dec. 11, 1928). In the fall of 1926, Chapin began teaching an evening class at a local high school (she also continued to work at Fisk) and would often stay up late preparing for class or correcting her students' bookkeeping papers. About a month into the class, she wrote, "Not much work at office today tho' [they?] managed to keep me busy because I wanted to work on my school work. Stayed up till about one a.m. correcting papers." During other slow periods at Fisk she

occasionally "kill[ed] time" by writing letters or reading (Nov. 15, 1926; May 29, 1926; June 26, 1926).

As much as personal uses of literacy are enabled through the use of office technologies, resources, time, and knowhow, so too can these literacies migrate beyond their workplace origins and take on new uses or meanings for writers. One of the most intriguing aspects of Irene Chapin as a historical case study has been, for me, her decision to use shorthand for certain passages recorded in her personal diary. While all of the entries in Chapin's 1926 and 1927 diaries are written in ordinary longhand, her 1928 diary includes a number of passages written in shorthand, suggesting that she may have wanted to keep some of the entries more private (Fig. 4). I was curious about the contents of the shorthand passages, and since I lacked the skills to transcribe them myself, I sent photos of three such passages to a semiretired legal stenographer named Nancy Baker, the mother of a friend of mine. I gave her a little context and asked if she could make out what the passages said.[14] Baker replied via email, reporting,

> I've been looking and relooking at the shorthand notes in the diary and I think I've come to the extent of my translation, and it may not be right even now. There are so many factors that determine a person's shorthand. The same characters can mean totally different things, depending on the context of the paragraph or sentence. For instance, the words "are, our, hour" are all written with the same character, and the person doing the writing knows what it is because of how it's used in the sentence. So keep in mind that depending on what I "thought" was said in the sentence, I translated some of the characters accordingly.

Baker's comments about the transcription *process* were in some ways even more enlightening to me than her transcriptions of the diary entries, because they highlighted the mental work and specialized training involved in decoding shorthand and reconstituting it as alphabetic text. Her comments suggest, too, that shorthand can be at least as individualized or "personal" as handwriting.

In a piece written for the *London Review of Books* a few years ago, Leah Price, a scholar of Victorian literature, sounded a death knell for stenography noting that "[o]n shorthand-themed list serves, the most poignant postings ask for help decoding a grandmother or an aunt's diary" (43). The existence of such materials presents a challenge to scholars and family members alike. When a widower named Don Lillibridge decided to donate his wife's diaries to the Schlesinger library, a team of at least a dozen women (some of them retired secretaries) was assembled to transcribe the diaries for the benefit of future researchers. His wife, Florence, who had been an English teacher and dean of a girls' school, had used Gregg shorthand to record her diaries—some thirty-two volumes, spanning more than thirty years (Jacob). That such diaries exist is both a testament to women's widespread mastery of shorthand as a technological skill and a reminder that there are many of these personal appropriations of office skills yet to be studied.

To dismiss the literate activity of clerical workers as purely or primarily "mechanical" runs counter to current theories of writing, which understand literacy to be situated, material, and distributed—and worthy of study whether used to ends that are dramatic or ordinary, within contexts that are empowering or oppressive. I do not mean to suggest that deskilling is a made-up idea or that white-collar workers never felt the effects of segmentation and routinization. Many did.

Nor do I mean to suggest that workers were never alienated or unhappy. Chapin expresses a range of emotions in response to her work at Fisk; she questions her purpose and expresses regret about not having pursued a career in teaching. Yet, even as we acknowledge the real limitations that women encountered in the early twentieth-century office, it is important that we not accept uncritically the discourses that helped shape those limitations. I believe that the twin narratives of deskilling and a gender-coded notion of "head" work removed from "hand" work have become so dominant as to overshadow the individual stories and voices of real office workers like Chapin. When we in composition and rhetoric look at clerical work from this period, it has become, I think, difficult to recognize the textual production that occurred there as connected to what we study: writing, rhetoric, and literacy.

I want to return now to a question raised earlier: why do we (historians) seem to value some literacies more than others? First, as I have argued above, stereotypes and other identifications (assumptions about clerical work as "mechanical," for instance) can become calcified and shape our thinking about which subjects are worthy of recovery. Second, we might consider the extent to which our histories have focused on narratives that privilege activist literacies, civic engagement, and the achievements of elite women to the exclusion of seemingly mundane or "utilitarian" literacies. Without question, such histories do important work and serve as a much-needed corrective to histories that have focused disproportionately on the experiences of famous white men. But as historiography in composition and rhetoric continues to broaden and mature, we must continue to ask whose literacy experiences are being left out. As Susan Miller has argued, we should consider "*all* available writers and *all* available writings" to be worthy of study ("Writing Studies" 45). At the start of this essay I asked what we miss when we accept, more or less uncritically, narratives of women's clerical work as deskilled and mechanical. One consequence is an identity consequence: there is an entire class of people whose literacy practices we marginalize, though who falls into that "class" may not be so easy to pin down. Some have argued that clerical workers have been overlooked due to a working class bias (Rohan 242-3) or because clerical workers constitute an intermediate class, neither skilled blue-collar workers nor management (Bjelopera 2, 9). In the early twentieth century, clerical work was coded as *both* working class and middle class, and language use and rhetorics of mechanization were both part of this ambivalent coding.

In closing, I simply wish to urge that we prevent the erasure and loss of stories about women's clerical literacies, and that we present this history in all its complexity, resisting the easy stereotypes that have been made so readily available. So, with that in mind, and as my title says: Let's take shorthand for (*as*) literacy. Let's recognize clerical workers as writers worthy of study and bring them into the larger project of historicizing literacy in the United States.[18]

NOTES

[1] Historians in other disciplines, by contrast, have produced an abundance of work on women in the early twentieth century office; see, for instance, book-length histories of clerical work by Davies, Fine, Kwolek-Folland, Strom, and Srole.

[2] For instance, the women who worked as computer programmers and technicians on the ENIAC project during WWII were classified as clerical workers (at a "subprofessional" grade), despite the high level of mathematical skill the work required (Light 301). Technical writers have sometimes complained of being viewed by engineers as "secretaries," and in educational settings the expectation that young women will "just" go on to become clerical workers shows up in the way educators talk about students. For an example of the latter, see CCCC chair Karl Dykema's 1951 article on the problem of assessing mechanical errors in freshman themes. In it, Dykema describes the challenges presented by three hypothetical students: the first two are male students (called X and Y) who have good ideas but problems with spoken or written expression, while the work of the third student, "a girl of mediocre capacity" called Z, is both "perfectly correct and perfectly dull" (5). Dykema concludes that "it is Z who does not matter," since she "will ultimately vegetate her life away as an excellent typist, preferably for X, who sorely needs her, though strictly in a stenographic capacity" (5).

[3] Ohmann, for example, has argued that "English teachers have helped train the kind of work force capitalists need in a productive system that relies less and less on purely manual labor" and have helped to cultivate the personal qualities and discipline "necessary to perform the alienated labor that will be the lot of most" (8). Strickland suggests that while scholars like Ohmann have examined the ways that capitalist interests shape English instruction, they have given less attention to discursive networks and their ideological investments—for instance, managerial logics that bind together economic imperatives with ideologies of gender and race (21). Brandt's *Literacy in American Lives* likens literacy to a commodity whose value is always shifting in response to changes in larger material systems and economies; her study demonstrates, as well, the importance of the workplace as a sponsor of literacy for many Americans during the twentieth century.

[4] As Strom observes, these two jobs classifications (secretary vs. stenographer) conveyed "important distinctions . . . based on class, craft, and age" (1). These distinctions have been blurred, however. Many women employed in clerical work preferred to identify as "secretaries" because of the higher status that title connoted; for much of the general public, "secretary" functioned as a generic term for any woman who worked in an office, regardless of her actual title or status.

[5] Other images, showing rows of male clerks on one side of the room and female workers on the other, or distributed according to supervisory patterns, further illustrate some of the ways that gender was reinforced in the office. For a discussion of gender and status in such spaces, see Kwolek-Folland (94-128), who argues that the office workplace was neither the model of efficiency that employers wanted nor "the personalized space workers attempted to achieve" (128).

[6] Although "the one best way" has sometimes been associated with Taylor, it is more rightly linked to Frank and Lillian Gilbreth, pioneers and proponents of motion study, who used the phrase repeatedly in their writings.

[7] For example, Strom observes that Scovill Manufacturing Corporation was one company that "made little progress in systematizing its stenographic work" (46). This did not prevent scientific managers from trying, of course: some stenographers found themselves relocated to centralized steno departments or typing pools where they took dictation for many executives rather than working exclusively for one person. William Henry Leffingwell, a disciple of Taylor, made it his mission to bring Taylorism to the office and proposed an array of inventive strategies for doing

so, including a system of numbered, pre-written paragraphs that could be mixed and matched by "lower-calibered" workers to meet the needs of a variety of common recurring situations. Even so, Leffingwell conceded that "[such a system] cannot be used without brains entirely" (*Scientific* 89).

[8] Even Braverman has acknowledged that "[t]his picture of the clerk as an assistant manager, retainer, confidant, management trainee, and prospective son-in-law can of course be overdrawn" (294). See Augst for melancholy sketches of day-to-day life as set down in the diaries of nineteenth century male clerks (207-15). Bjelopera draws upon records of a Philadelphia business college and department store to develop a book-length historical analysis of male and female clerks that extends beyond the workplace.

[9] For an alternate take on the differences between stenography and bookkeeping, see Srole, who contrasts the push to simplify shorthand systems and streamline education for aspiring stenographers with the growing sense of accounting as an emerging profession with abstract "theoretical trappings" that "became the basis for expansive theoretical training" (117).

[10] For a detailed discussion of this rhetorical reshaping of stenography as "masculine," see chapter 4 of Srole's *Transcribing Class and Gender*. Of particular interest, for the purposes of this essay, are late-nineteenth-century characterizations of the male court reporter's labor as strenuous mental work that required both physical endurance and manly toughness.

[11] Strickland points to use of the "current-traditional" label as a distancing move that "slough[s] off" the early twentieth century as a period defined by what "has been too easily dismissed as a formalistic, mechanistic writing pedagogy" (74-75). Rice argues that the danger of such distancing is that we "risk calcifying a distinction between the production work of texts . . . and the produced texts themselves" (367-68). She notes that our prejudices against "mechanics" pose a particular problem in this age of digital composition and urges that "we ourselves must be able to imagine, improvise, and enact texts in different media"—to teach and engage in "rhetorical mechanics" (379).

[12] There is a robust scholarship to point to here, but we might begin with Ede and Lunsford's work on authorship and collaboration, especially their discussion of one executive's collaborative writing relationship with his secretary, Glenna Johnston (36-38); Woodmansee and Jaszi's work on authorship; and Brandt's work on ghostwriting ("Who's the President?"). See also Susan Miller, who in reviewing the historical configurations of writing reminds us that "writers may be scribes, compilers, and commentators on others' writing" (*Rescuing* 54).

[13] For a brief introductory overview of scholarship that takes up women, gender, and technology, see Lerman, Oldenziel, and Mohun's "The Shoulders We Stand On/The View from Here: Historiography and Directions for Research."

[14] The library finding aid for the Chapin diaries suggested that the shorthand entries might offer insight into Chapin's increasingly "intense friendship" with a stenographer named Marion Warner. According to the archivist, however, no translation of the shorthand had been attempted, and the library had no additional information about Chapin's friendship with Warner beyond what appeared in the diary. With all of that in mind, I selected two shorthand passages for translation that, based on the surrounding content, seemed to be about Marion, as well as a third passage (for comparison) that seemed obviously related to someone else (a woman named Betty). I suspected that Chapin had probably used a version of Gregg shorthand, which was more commonly used in US businesses than Pitman. While I do own a Gregg shorthand manual, I did not attempt the translation myself, as it seemed likely that I would get faster—and more accurate—results by consulting someone who was experienced with shorthand. The transcribed passages from Baker support my sense that Chapin used shorthand for content of a more personal nature. One of the transcribed passages reads, "Marion made a great resolve and I prayed God to help her keep it. May she never fail!" (Saturday, April 28, 1928). As for Chapin's friendship with Marion Warner, more research is needed. Based on

my analysis of the diaries, it seems that Chapin knew at least three or four different women named Marion, which presents an additional challenge for tracking the development of their relationship.

[15] Many thanks to Donna LeCourt, Amy Wan, and two anonymous reviewers for their feedback on this essay; thanks also to Nancy Baker for generously agreeing to transcribe passages from Chapin's diary and to Lori Baker for putting me in touch with her mother.

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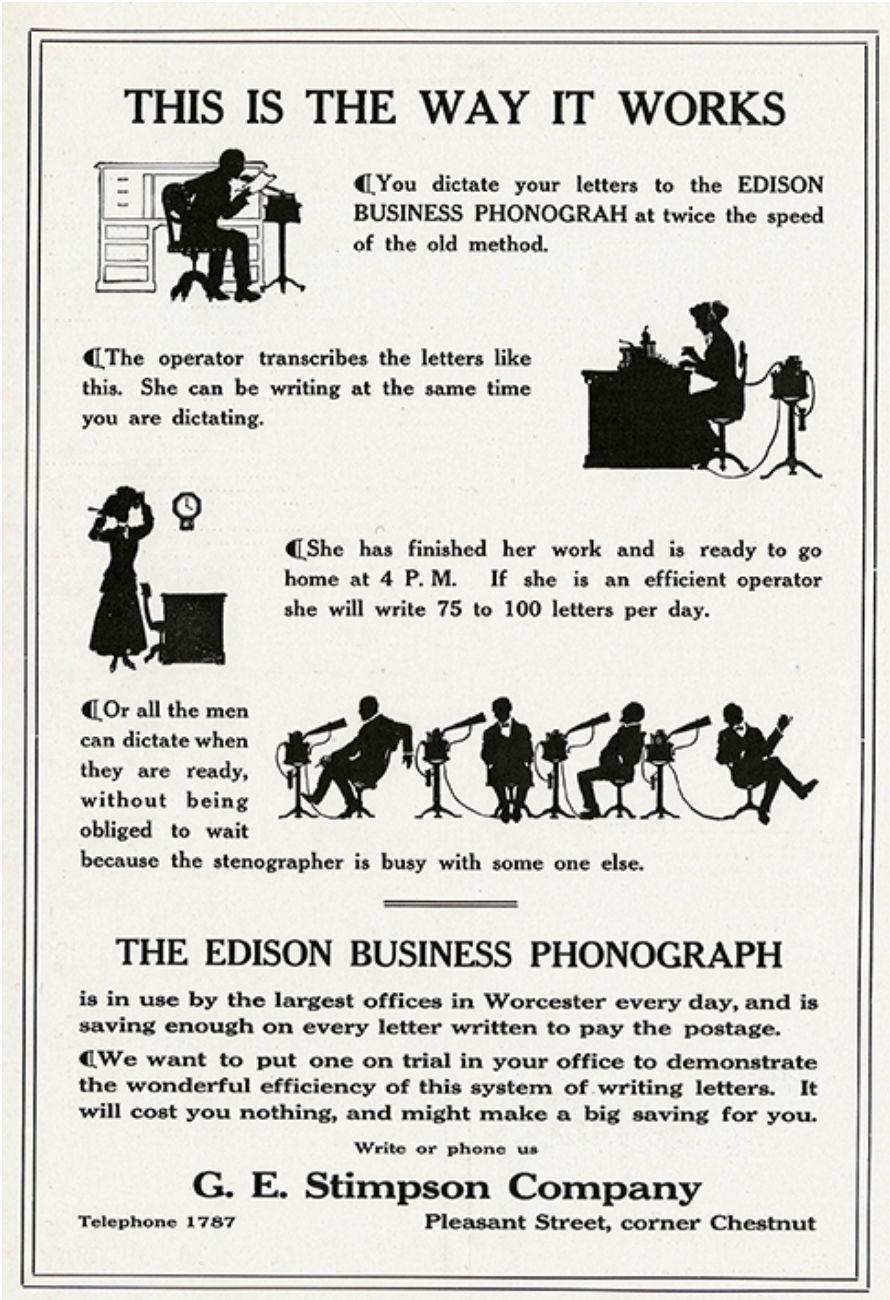
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APPENDIX

Figure 1: This 1911 advertisement promises that the Edison Business Phonograph will deliver efficiency by ensuring that dictators won't be kept waiting by a busy or absent stenographer.



THIS IS THE WAY IT WORKS

¶You dictate your letters to the EDISON BUSINESS PHONOGRAH at twice the speed of the old method.

¶The operator transcribes the letters like this. She can be writing at the same time you are dictating.

¶She has finished her work and is ready to go home at 4 P. M. If she is an efficient operator she will write 75 to 100 letters per day.

¶Or all the men can dictate when they are ready, without being obliged to wait because the stenographer is busy with some one else.

THE EDISON BUSINESS PHONOGRAPH

is in use by the largest offices in Worcester every day, and is saving enough on every letter written to pay the postage.

¶We want to put one on trial in your office to demonstrate the wonderful efficiency of this system of writing letters. It will cost you nothing, and might make a big saving for you.

Write or phone us

G. E. Stimpson Company

Telephone 1787 — Pleasant Street, corner Chestnut

Figure 2: Irene Chapin's pocket-sized diaries for 1926, 1927, and 1928. Pencil has been included for scale. Photo by Janine Solberg.



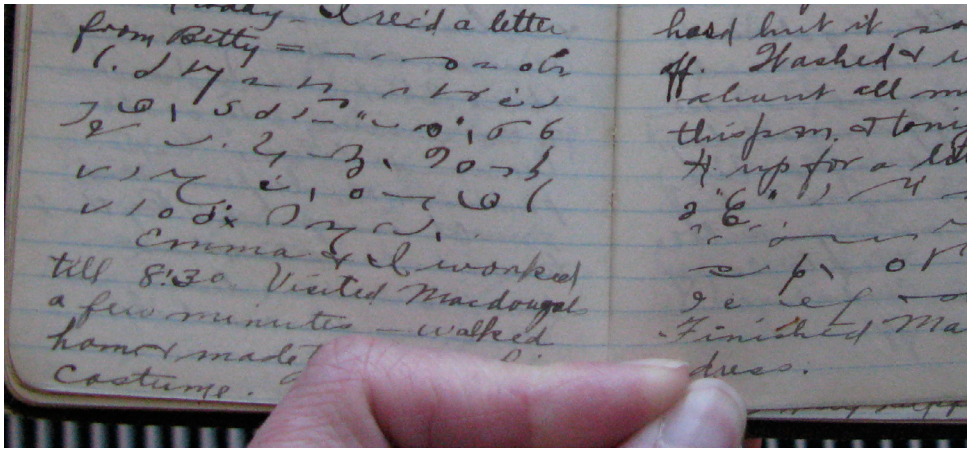
Figure 3: Work-related excerpts culled from Irene Chapin's 1926 diary.

Tues, May 11	"Stayed awake all day!"
Wed, May 12	"A perfect day. Drove the Chevie [sic] to work & home again. Can't manage to get out of a small space yet. Class meeting at Mrs. Alice Thomas'[.] Had a delightful time. Ruth Wentworth there. A dollar meeting—some clever poems telling how they were earned."
Fri, May 14	"Worked on enclosing all day—a kindergarten job. Less muggy tonight—Worked all evening. A pretty little moon—bright stars—peeping frogs and the breath a spring in the air tonight"
Mon, May 17	"Stuck steadily to addressing envelopes most all day[.] Had a little dictation."
Tues, May 18	"The days in the office pass more swiftly now. I'm getting acquainted more with the gang."
Wed, May 19	"No one busy in Steno. Dept. today—had a real easy day"

Thurs, May 20	"Kept quite busy—had considerable dictation from Mr. Tute. Cool and breezy tonight. … Found such lovely swamp violets tonight. I feel quite depressed. I don't know why."
Fri, May 21	"Had a rather enjoyable day. This world seems a pretty good place after all."
Mon, May 24	"Hardly a thing to do at the office today"
Tues, May 25	"Busier today at office, pasting labels on 'broadsides.' How interesting."
Thurs, May 27	"A day of work. Had supper and worked until ten o'clock tonight. Came home in a wonderful big 7 passenger car. 13 of us stayed."
Fri, May 28	"Finished all that tedious work early so most of us loafed the rest of the pm."
Sat, May 29	"Had to report to the office this am & stayed until 11 though had nothing to do but read."
Wed, June 2	"I was 'swamped' with dictation today & even tho' I worked all noon I couldn't finish it."
Thurs, Jun 3	"Worked industriously all day up to 1:40 pm (inc[luding] noon hour) so I could get the rest of the pm off."
Wed, June 9	"Kept busy copying today."
Thurs, June 10	"Used an LC Smith typewriter for the 1st time today. It has many features which are different & time & energy savers."
Fri, June 11	"Worked on hectograph schedules today—rather particular work. … I am quite disgusted because I have to work tomorrow [a Saturday]. I think some others might try dictation once in a while."
Sat, June 12	Marion Holmes came up to take me to work. Had but one letter all morning. Much rather have stayed home.
Tues, June 15	"Not very busy at office. Everybody drowsy."
Fri, June 18	"Expected to have the p.m. off and go shopping but W.H.B. gave me oodles of dictation which kept me busy until 5:30 tonight. Didn't want to leave it over the weekend."
Mon, June 21	"A busy day—Whose Steno is she? Tute's? or W.H.B? Between the two I certainly kept busy & couldn't take the p.m. off as I had hoped."
Wed, June 23	"Again a lazy day. Elva and I gossiped all day."
Fri, June 25	"Not so busy today[.] Had the dickens of a time cleaning typewriters this a.m. all of them wrecks. Went to HS reunion tonight. No 1919ers there but me. Had a pretty good time[.] '9 dishes ice cream' between the 4 of us. Shocking"
Wed, June 30	"Worked all a.m. on simple report. Terribly sleepy this p.m. & missed some of my dictation. Couldn't possibly dope it out although I brót [brought] my notebook home and studied it faithfully."
Thurs, July 1	"Didn't work so very hard at the office today."
Mon, July 19	"Such a pleasant day. Started off fine with a nice, long newsy letter from Ethel Barton and one from Miss Coff. I enjoyed my dictation at office and had a dandy time playing tennis tonight . . ."
Tues, July 20	"Got awfully hot & stuffy in [the] office this pm"

Thurs, July 22	"The mercury climbed still higher today. Some shops closed at noon[.] 97° in our office."
Mon, July 26	"Went to a spiritualist 'medium' tonight with Alice Reid and Ruth B. She promises me a change in my work and Success. Oh that it might be true!"
Fri, Aug 6	"It was hard getting up after last nights party. . . . This was Elva's last day at Fisk[.] I hate to have her go so far away. Took dictation from JD Anderson V.P., such excitement."
Tues, Aug 10	"Worked mostly for J.D. today—Miss Burns informs me that she has put through a $2.00 raise[.] It certainly will be appreciated."
Wed, Aug 11	"Such a busy day—I've been working for everybody & everything seemed so upsidedown."
Fri, Aug 13	"My last day in the Order Dept."
Mon, Aug 16	"Seemed rather good to be back in Stenographic again. Still sleepy"
Tues, Aug 24	"Still on 'long carriage' work[.] I'm pretty slow at it." ... "I wish he [Harley] could spell!"
Wed, Aug 25	"Still on same job. Somebody mysteriously destroys my morning's work but I learn the office boys are guilty."
Mon, Aug 30	"Back on the job. [T]ook slews of dictation . . . Take a week to transcribe, I'm afraid."
Wed, Sept 8	"Just another day - moved to another desk - I wonder if I shall settle permanently. Feel rather out of sorts with the world today. Wish I were beginning teaching again. I think I could succeed."
Fri, Dec 31	"New Year's Eve - Another year has gone and again I look back and sigh—for what real thing have I accomplished during these 365 days? What good have I done—how much have I learned—whom have I helped? God grant that during this New Year that I may make a better record. Help me to think better that I may live better. Forgive me for my past failures and strengthen me. Help me to become more valuable to my employers—more patient with my family and more honest to myself."

Figure 4: Occasional passages written in shorthand entries appear in Irene Chapin's 1928 diary. Chapin recorded the majority of her diary in longhand and seems to have reserved shorthand for more personal or sensitive material. Photo by Janine Solberg.



'Like signposts on the road': The Function of Literacy in Constructing Black Queer Ancestors

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ABSTRACT

Previous scholarship in literacy and composition has noted the importance and function of ancestors in the literacy and rhetorical practices of descendants. However, such research has not explored how ancestorship functions for people at the marginalized intersection of racialized otherness and queer sexualities and genders. This article offers one response to this gap by reporting on the role of literacy in the life stories of sixty Black queer people residing in various regions across the United States who named historical erasure as a particularly detrimental form of oppression enacted by, though subverted through, literacy. An analysis of participants' uses of literacy to navigate historical erasure reveals that as participants encounter historical erasure, they disrupt its negative impact through four patterns of ancestorship: (1) literacy is used to create, discover, and affirm relationships to ancestors; (2) ancestors model the multiplicity of identities as a category of rhetorical analysis; (3) descendants' identity formation/affirmation is affected by an ancestors' writing and lives; and (4) descendants receive cross-generational mandates to become ancestors through literacy. Further, while African American literacies and LGBTQ literacies have each emerged as potent areas of scholarship in literacy and composition studies, the absence of a sustained and substantive discussion at the intersection of both areas contributes to a larger critical vacuum in rhetoric and composition in which we have overlooked the literacy and composition practices shaped at the intersection of race and queerness. This article begins to address this oversight through an in-depth exploration of a specific literacy and rhetorical practice among Black LGBTQ people.

KEYWORDS

literacy; ancestorship; African American; LGBT; queer; race; sexuality; gender; pedagogy; Black Queer theory; qualitative research; intersectionality; historical erasure

> *Black people have been here before us and survived. We can read their lives like signposts on the road and find . . . that each one of us is here because somebody before us did something to make it possible We have the power those who came before us have given us, to move beyond the place where they were standing.* (Audre Lorde, "Learning from the 60s" 138, 144)

> *If we don't keep in touch with the ancestor… we are, in fact, lost.* (Toni Morrison, "Rootedness: The Ancestor as Foundation" 344)

History matters for Stephanie Flowers,[1] who in 1987, at the age of 18 and in her first semester at an Ivy League university, came out as a Black lesbian. The community in which she came out was one of White lesbian feminists; she described the experience as rewarding yet difficult, because she learned "to be an activist around queer issues and around race issues in the queer community . . . But at the same time, it was born out of painful encounters with people." There were no visible queer or queer-of-color spaces on her campus, and she had no access to or awareness of Black lesbian history—and she maintains that this especially detrimental form of historical erasure adversely affected her personal and intellectual development. Flowers encountered significant levels of racism within this community; however, she was able to use activist tools—including preparing and disseminating pamphlets, organizing consciousness raising sessions and ally workshops, and reflective exercises such as journaling—to achieve cognizance of racial diversity and racism in both her lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer (LGBTQ) space and her feminist space. Key to this transformation was Flowers's introduction to Black lesbian feminist writers. When searching for support of this transformation, she discovered Pat Parker's poetry collection *Movement in Black* (1978) and Audre Lorde's *Zami* (1982):

> a friend of mine, another Black lesbian at school, gave me an Audre Lorde book and I was like amazed. You know, I'd never heard another human being articulate things that were so deep and meaningful that I felt that she was also feeling and willing to put down on a page and someone who also identified as a Black lesbian, and political, and "Out," and taking risks, and describing that fear of standing up for yourself and acknowledging that you feel bad and you do it anyway I feel like [Lorde] gave me courage to do a lot of things. Pat Parker also. Just reading about risks that they're willing to take in their lives, you know, and there was always a sense of that understanding that you were never meant to survive, so trying to protect yourself in some way by living in whatever closet is not going to help you survive.

Historical rootedness is vital to Flowers's survival: the words of Black lesbian ancestors like Lorde and Parker changed her life. In the same interview, she also described literacy as a set of "survival techniques," and she easily recalled episodes when she used her literacy as a means to access

Black LGBTQ ancestors in order to survive. Flowers's definition of literacy mirrors that of many in literacy and composition studies, including myself and Jacqueline Jones Royster, who describes literacy as what happens when we "gain access to information" and proceed to "use this information . . . to articulate lives and experiences and also to identify, think through, refine, and solve problems, sometimes complex problems, over time" (Royster 45). This theme expressed by Flowers resounded across the interviews I conducted with sixty Black LGBTQ people about everyday literacy practices and a range of issues concerning their personal identities, in which more than three-quarters of the interviewees, like Flowers, affirmed this point: historical rootedness is a key ingredient to Black LGBTQ identity construction, affirmation, values, ways of knowing, and ways of being. This perspective evinces, as Gwen Gorzelsky writes, "the various roles literate practices can play and the personal and social effects they can foster" (5). Unfortunately, for many Black LGBTQ people, literacy practices that offer the achievement and gifts of rootedness are interrupted by the erasure of Black queer history. In this context, historical erasure operates as the omission, occlusion, or ignoring of Black LGBTQ people, their contributions, and lived experiences. In effect, historical erasure is a deterrent to the full opportunities for growth, affirmation, and community made possible through literacy practices aimed at achieving rootedness.

This article examines the recursive practice of historical erasure as a misuse of literacy experienced by Black LGBTQ people and the centrality of literacy to remedying the negative impact of historical erasure on these individuals. For sure, as Harvey Graff writes in the inaugural issue of *Literacy in Composition Studies*, "[t]he roster of literacy studies' commissions and omissions is lengthy" (17). The link I draw from literacy to historical erasure adds yet another item to that roster. But I am drawn to what the offenses of historical erasure and its consequences can tell us in the way of literacies that are uniquely formed in such an event. Focusing on Black LGBTQ life and culture, I argue that historical erasure places a unique pressure on an individual's literacies under which reading and writing are two acts that may excavate hidden histories from the rubble of unrecognition and develop ancestorship. Thus, my analysis emphasizes the role of literacy in creating and discovering ancestors, as well as the impact on an individual's literacy practices afterward, the combination of which shows ancestors to be, as Deborah Brandt has offered, "sponsors of literacy . . . any agents, local or distant, concrete or abstract, who enable, support, teach, and model, as well as recruit, regulate, suppress, or withhold, literacy—and gain advantage by it in some way" (19). In my research, ancestors—deceased individuals with whom research participants had no known blood relations—are assuredly "distant" and "abstract" figures who "enable," "support," "teach," and "model" Black queer literacies for research participants. Through the tenacious reading, research, and writing that descendants employ to engage them, ancestors gain the advantage of being resurrected from the slow death of historical erasure. In quests for rootedness, my research participants form an array of literacies to subvert the negative effects of historical erasure.

On the basis of research participants' life stories, I propose four patterns of ancestorship as developed through literacy: (1) literacy is used to create, discover, and affirm relationships to

ancestors; (2) ancestors model the multiplicity of identities as a category of rhetorical analysis; (3) descendants' identity formation/affirmation is affected by an ancestors' writing and lives; and (4) descendants receive cross-generational mandates to become ancestors through literacy. In each of these patterns, Black LGBTQ people and their allies appropriate literacy to identify and explicate historical erasure: what it is, what its effects are, how it happens, and how to challenge it. This range of recursive literacies characterizes the discursive relations between ancestors and descendants and demonstrates how Black queers use literacy to form relationships with ancestors to address historical erasure when they uncover buried histories, engender Black queer identity formation and affirmation, create genealogical links, and preserve cultural traditions. I categorize such literacy practices as *life-fashioning*,[2] which refers to the ways in which one achieves self-care, resistance, collective empowerment, and personal affirmation. The focuses of life-fashioning herein are those identifiable literacy practices Black queers employ or create when faced with historical erasure. After examining four patterns of ancestorship developed through literacy, I conclude with a discussion of the implications of my findings for curriculum and theory within the studies of literacy and composition. For example, I describe the need to reconsider how we conceptualize identity in historical and theoretical contexts within literacy, rhetoric, and composition. I also posit how the reading and writing practices examined in my analysis can serve to generate further studies of the relationships among literacy, history, and formation of identity, and I discuss the implications for literacy and composition pedagogy.

Indeed, the theme of ancestorship and literacy has deep roots within literacy and composition studies. Jacqueline Jones Royster has often noted the ways that intellectual heritage matters in our positions as researchers, teachers, and learners. Reflecting on her work with primarily African American female students in Spelman College's writing program, Royster writes that, like her students learning about the intellectual heritage of their Black women foremothers, scholars' "pursuit of intellectual authority can be informed and sanctioned by their conscious and specific awareness of the historical conditions and circumstances of others like themselves" (266). For her students, discovering their intellectual and cultural connection to Black women essayists and orators in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries helped them "to fashion for themselves their own authority to speak, to write, to learn, and to produce when they can determine, not just the resonance of their own lives with others, but also the dissonance" (267-68). Here Royster describes the students' mandate to use literacy and rhetoric to continue the work of their ancestors who used the essay to seek social change for black women, but she acknowledges that the students must seek change according to the conditions of their present. My focus on Black LGBTQ people, a group that has not received any significant attention within literacy, composition, or rhetorical studies, provides initial insight into not only the intellectual heritage from which Black LGBTQ people draw, but also the ways in which their literacies shape and are shaped by their lived experiences at the intersections of race and queerness.

Much as Royster characterizes the impact of ancestors as intellectual heritage on her students,

Malea Powell eloquently describes the impact of her own ancestors on the mandates she feels to write and contribute to the field, detailing the ways "ghost stories" are "rooted in other knowledges, other ways of being and becoming that frequently go unheard and unsaid" (12). Powell "think[s] a lot about what ghost stories can teach us, how in telling them [she] might both honor the knowledge that isn't honored in universities and do so in a way that interweaves these stories with more recognizable academic theorizing as well" (12). Powell emphasizes the function of literacy in producing ancestorship that exposes the exclusion of what Toni Morrison has called "discredited knowledges" (342), and the usefulness of such exposure to recovering these marginalized epistemologies and ontologies from economies of knowledge that overlook them. My focus affirms the practice of literacy mobilized to produce ancestorship, while also pointing toward the necessity of understanding this theory and praxis from the specific positionalities that various groups have to history and its unique effects on conceptions of and access to ancestorship, as well as the historical, political, and cultural contexts in which those groups experience and employ literacies. My comments center on the meanings Black LGBTQ people give to their literacies, and how they employ them on their own terms. Doing so, I posit the ways scholars might further investigate the uses of literacy in the pervasiveness of historical erasure and also the production of ancestorship for a diversity of other individuals and groups, each providing some additional insight that may resonate for the future of literacy and composition theory and pedagogy.

Implicit in Royster's and Powell's claims is a recursive trope for literacy: its interconnections and disconnections with identities. For both, identity emerges in the form of ancestorship coded as intellectual heritage, ghosts, and the fuel each provides for the purposing of one's literacies in relationship to history. Further drawing such interconnections, Villanueva links literacy and identity to history by way of memory, noting "connections between narratives by people of color and the need to reclaim a memory, memory of an identity in formation, constant reformation, the need to reclaim memory of an identity as formed through the generations . . . the need to reclaim and retain the memory of the imperial lords, those who have forcibly changed the identities of people of color through colonization" (269). What Villanueva points to is the necessity of thinking of the ways identities and language are formed and reformed across generations and exist as a historical continuum. In this article I take incidents of historical erasure and the omission of Black queer history, life, culture, and ancestors from historical records as acts of oppression in that they interrupt or close off the possibility of accessing and making use of the historical continuum of one's identity and literacies. Through this approach I reclaim historical erasure as a generative site for the theorization of an array of literacy practices, as literacy is

"Through the tenacious reading, research, and writing that descendants employ to engage them, ancestors gain the advantage of being resurrected from the slow death of historical erasure. In quests for rootedness, my research participants form an array of literacies to subvert the negative effects of historical erasure."

prevalent in the act of erasure itself and in the various interventions my research participants pursue in the construction of Black queer ancestorship. Further, Villanueva's focus on narrative is critical because it is the genre by which most descendants discover ancestors and are affirmed, mandated, and challenged. These narratives are encoded in books, personal documents, oral histories, talk and other "texts," and themselves become the model for the uses of writing and other literacies by descendants. For example, in my research I note that it is through writing that many ancestors model for research participants the importance of telling their own stories as an intervention into historical erasure, a challenge that some of the research participants take up as evidenced in their own uses of writing to leave roots that may inspire and make life better for the next generation of Black LGBTQ people. This writing might include coming-out stories, creative non-fiction, and so on. Thus, research participants mimic the ways ancestors were trailblazers for later generations.

My theorization of the four patterns of ancestorship developed through literacy, as well as my definition of historical erasure and ancestorship, is based on analysis of the sixty original in-depth interviews I conducted. I began doing these interviews in 2007. I located interviewees through a number of means, including community organizations, online social networks, personal acquaintances, nightclubs, faith/worship centers, and other social spaces. The result of this recruitment process was a pool of research participants representing diversity of region, age, sex, sexual identity, gender identity and expression, economic class, educational attainment, religious and spiritual affiliation (or non-affiliation), and family-of-origin structure. Each interviewee self-identified as a Black LGBTQ person and was born between 1940 and 1991. Interviewees were aged 18–70 years at the time of our discussion and resided in regions across the United States.

I conducted interviews exploring questions at the intersection of Blackness, queerness, and literacy.[3] My questions did not directly pursue history or ancestorship itself, but I did inquire about interviewees' general thoughts on contemporary Black LGBTQ life including political issues, cultural productions (books, films, musicians, visual artists), and online social networks. The original purpose of the study was to investigate all the major features of the literacy practices of Black LGBTQ people. Interviews lasted approximately 2.5–3 hours. I conducted most interviews in person; however, in order to achieve demographic diversity, particularly in terms of geography, I completed a number of phone interviews using the same script. These interviews yielded hundreds of hours of audio-taped dialogue, which was transcribed, coded, and categorized. These coded data form the basis for the conceptual claims herein.

I coded and analyzed interview data inductively according to grounded theory, a research methodology that stresses a close, systematic, and thorough search of a participant's in-depth life story and the analysis of patterns to form strong conceptual explanations.[4] Although my larger book project explores several patterns that emerged from a grounded close reading of the data—*literacy terror*, *literacy concealment*, and *fictive kinship*, for example—this article focuses more narrowly on the specific pattern of ancestorship as developed through literacy. To explore the theme of ancestorship, I highlight the stories of several participants whose experiences illustrate trends that crossed life-story

accounts. In the following sections, I illustrate the four patterns of ancestorship that are developed from analysis of research participants' life stories. Through these patterns, we come to a better understanding of how Black LGBTQ people construct ancestors and seek to counteract and prevent historical erasure through their literacy practices. Thus, this article provides an in-depth analysis of a particular literacy practice shaped at the intersections of Blackness and queerness, with implications for current conceptions of literacy history, theory, and pedagogy.

ANCESTORS AND ANCESTORSHIP IN THEORY AND PRACTICE

Although many scholars have acknowledged historical erasures, none have examined their reoccurrence and their impact on literacy learning and practice—a glaring oversight, given that literacy is a robust part of burying or unearthing the past, as evidenced through the uses of print and other literacy tools to construct historical narratives that exclude Black queer life and contributions.[5] When literacy is implicated in acts of historical erasure, such uses of literacy engender normative race, gender, and sexual politics by creating an historical vacuum. For Black LGBTQ people, the effect of this historical vacuum is that the evidence of Black LGBTQ identity, life, and culture through which many people move and be in the world—to create and affirm themselves, form community, and fashion social and political critique—is disappeared from historical records, memory, and public discourse. This practice serves the interests of normativizing ways of being, by erasing any evidence of nonnormativity from which Black queers may achieve rootedness, draw inspiration, and fuel defiance, resistance, or rebellion to these norms. These normative politics grow from racist and heteropatriarchal hegemony, creating conditions in which Black queers have reason to be concerned about their psychological and physical safety, as well as their place in the economies of knowledge production and cultural capital that determine how individuals and groups are (de)valued and (mis)represented. My research has shown that ancestor figures are a primary source of intervention to individuals and groups when faced with such troubling practices. Analyzing uses of literacy to produce connections to one's ancestors provides insight into a range of literacies that enhance our epistemologies of the nexus of language, identity, history, and culture as they are employed to counteract or prevent historical erasure.

Honoring ancestors is a feature of the traditions of many African and African Diasporic peoples. Numerous scholars "corroborate the existence of ancestor veneration among enslaved Africans" (Fairley 545).[6] This is especially true of slave religious and spiritual practices such as the *ring shout*, which continues today throughout the African Diaspora, as well as rituals like performing libations, the ceremonial pouring of water or other drinks to show respect for ancestors and other divinities. Nancy J. Fairley says that ancestors are believed to have "a vested authority and interest in the social and physical conditions of their kin" (551). Thus, a part of honoring ancestors is appealing to them in the afterlife for their wisdom and counsel. In my research, ancestors refer to the dead

whom research participants identified as inspirational for Black and LGBTQ people. Some research participants named as ancestors people with whom they shared Black queer identity, while others did not require a shared identity to identify someone as an ancestor. Establishing this connection to ancestors often occurred through what I view as a research participant's tenacious reading, a phrase I use to characterize the vigor and depth with which people read a text against the popular interpretation or normative views. In the case of ancestors, those texts include widely circulated background information including biographical details such as government records, memoirs, and news reports. Through this tenacious reading, research participants accumulated enough information to sufficiently satisfy whatever requirements they applied for someone to be named an ancestor when much historical evidence had been erased. My focus is on how literacy serves to develop relationships with one's ancestors that then assist life-fashioning—in particular, as a means to disrupt historical erasure and promote identity formation and affirmation. I examine the function of literacy in the construction of ancestry by people who have encountered a unique form of historical erasure at the nexus of Black racial and queer gender and sexual identities.

"For instance, some participants described the ways in which an ancestor's life and work communicated to them how to survive and thrive in the midst of oppression. In turn, these participants felt called to use their own literacies to create texts that will similarly support later generations, thus anticipating their role as ancestors to those yet to come."

The most frequently cited ancestors among my research participants are those who were published writers, for reading and writing are a primary means by which individuals form intimate ties across space, time, and circumstance. Memoirs, speeches, poems, and other personal writing were especially prevalent as texts through which research participants developed rootedness. Timothy Barnett writes, "'personal' writing can provide an important entry into an analysis of social forces . . . personal writing can help students understand personal lives as linked to and reflective of social and political norms" (356). This is an argument that holds in the case of my research participants who draw upon the personal writing of ancestors to understand society's perceptions of Black queerness within the social and political norms across time. Extending this assessment of personal writing, I see research participants as finding a variety of other uses specific to the violence of historical erasure. Research participants are also using personal writing to amplify the social and political critiques in ancestors' writing that are ignored, to construct their own understandings of Black queerness that is unique to their own times, to affirm their connection to Black queer culture and community, and to affirm the usefulness of their own experiences, and indeed their own personal writing, as a foundation on which to formulate their own critiques and interventions into contemporary iterations of social and political issues. Published writing and archival documentation are among the default teaching tools and acceptable forms of documentation within schools, particularly within higher education, as well as the enterprise of

knowledge production, authentication, deployment, and consumption in general. Thus, it is not surprising that access to historical records contributed to decisions about who might be considered an ancestor, for many Black LGBTQ people frequently rely on reading and writing to suture the gaps left by historical erasure, cementing the influence of published writers and others whose documents have been documented in news reports, archival collections, and other public records. Many of these ancestors share identities with research participants, are people whom research participants learned about through tenacious reading, and who were also published writers or who left written records. Those cited most by research participants were poet Audre Lorde; activist, orator, and writer Bayard Rustin (a lead organizer of the 1963 March on Washington); writer James Baldwin; poet Pat Parker; writer and activist Joseph Beam; poet and essayist Essex Hemphill; and writer and artist Richard Bruce Nugent. Each of these individuals addressed, in various forms (memoirs, poems, short stories, speeches, and editorials), the particularities of being both Black and LGBTQ.

Ancestors are also those whom research participants felt introduced them to the theme of intersectionality from a Black queer perspective; subsequently, one can access this theme to construct and revise one's own sense of self. Numerous research participants described the challenges of trying to give language to their sense of Black queer identity and were discouraged from or encountered barriers to engaging the themes of Black queerness in writing by ancestors. In some instances these details were deliberately marginalized, particularly in classroom settings and other instances where research participants were required to read or otherwise learn about the lives of particular writers. For example, some research participants attended high school and college composition and literature classes where the works of writers like Audre Lorde and James Baldwin were taught in earnest, but noted that absent from instruction in those courses were matters of raced queerness. Participants, thus, continuously incurred the labor of having to excavate the identities and other details of the ancestor's life in order to create, identify, or affirm a relationship with them. Consequently, research participants described tenacious reading that served to bring to their attention the themes of race, gender, and sexual identity that were being suppressed in their class readings and lectures. This literacy practice brought about other literacy practices, such as when participants often raised these issues in class discussions contrary to instructors' expressed interests.

> ***"Such application of critical imagination is a literacy practice in itself, as it requires research participants to read the historical times and social world in which the ancestor lived as a way to form plausible details for a background that has been erased, then formulate stories through which they as descendants are connected to those ancestors."***

Finally, many described ancestors as those with whom research participants felt a shared sense of purpose to use literacy to inspire, support, and challenge future generations of Black LGBTQ people. For instance, some participants described the ways in which an ancestor's life and work

communicated to them how to survive and thrive in the midst of oppression. In turn, these participants felt called to use their own literacies to create texts that will similarly support later generations, thus anticipating their role as ancestors to those yet to come. In this way, ancestors are those who have called out through their writings and life details, thereby exemplifying to research participants how to employ their literacies to do the same.

FOUR PATTERNS OF ANCESTORSHIP DEVELOPED THROUGH LITERACY

Pattern 1: Literacy used to create, discover, and affirm relationships to ancestors

Critical imagination, writes Jacqueline Jones Royster, is "the ability to see the possibility of certain experiences even if we cannot know the specificity of them [It is] a term for a commitment to making connections and seeing possibility" (83). Stephanie Flowers's use of critical imagination illuminates other links between literacy and ancestry, such as the role of "creation" in forming, discovering, and affirming relationships to ancestors. In this, the first and most dominant of the four patterns of ancestorship developed through literacy, research participants employ a range of reading practices to create, discover, and affirm ancestors amid suppression of Black queer life and culture. By "creating" ancestors, I refer to the centrality of rhetorical invention in participants' relation to ancestors. For some participants, the historical erasure of ancestors has meant having to create from nothing a narrative genealogy for their forebears wherein they relate to them. For others, creation comes into play by naming individuals as ancestors despite the lack of clear relevance to participants or of confirmed biographical details or shared investments. Participants used the words "discovering," "locating," and "identifying" interchangeably to reference their selection of or stumbling on ancestors through an already visible and predetermined group of Black queer ancestors. I argue that even location and identification of ancestors contains an element of creation, because assigning meanings to the ancestors' identities—their life experiences, their writings, the historical moment, their connectivity—is already a practice of creation.

Flowers, who is a Black lesbian, was born in a small economically and racially diverse city on the east coast and currently resides in a large city in the south. Flowers easily recalled episodes like the moment she was introduced to the lives and works of Audre Lorde and Pat Parker through a Black lesbian college friend. This points to the role of school social networks outside of the classroom in creating connections to Black queer foremothers. Flowers's relationship to an educational institution provided such social networks; however, Flowers's experience also points to the failure of these same institutions, because the materials were not available in her own courses.

Flowers describes the link to her literacies, saying, "[r]eading was the only way I accessed [Parker and Lorde]," as she might otherwise not have encountered them. This detail highlights the authoritativeness of Black queer print culture in Flowers's ability to draw from the legacy of struggle of Black lesbian ancestors to name and act on her own challenges. Recall also the anecdote from the

beginning of the article, in which Flowers says that Parker and Lorde's courageousness in refusing to be anything other than themselves taught her that she might as well do the same. Both women, she said, taught her that she was never meant to survive" so she might as well be herself, a direct quote from Lorde's poem "A Litany for Survival." This anecdote is then also an example of literacy helping to invoke the ancestor in the descendant's consciousness in a sort of dialogue, or call and response. In *Talkin and Testifyin*, Geneva Smitherman defines call and response as "spontaneous verbal and non-verbal interaction between speaker and listener in which all of the speaker's statements ('calls') are punctuated by expressions ('responses') from the listener" (104). Smitherman says call and response "seeks to synthesize speakers and listeners in a unified movement" (108). In my analysis of research participants' life stories, I have discovered that ancestor and descendant serve in the position of speaker and listener, respectively, creating the feeling of a dialogue across the generations. This is especially seen in cross-generational uses of literacy to respond to historical erasure, as well as to derive the community-building benefits of call and response: an expression of shared knowledge and purpose implicit to its practice.

Recalling the presence of ancestors, research participants often depended as much on the imagined life as they did on biographical information or published writing. Given the reality of historical erasure, such applications of imagination were important to individuals like Flowers, creating a biographical narrative for ancestors that drew her closer to them. Such application of critical imagination is a literacy practice in itself, as it requires research participants to read the historical times and social world in which the ancestor lived as a way to form plausible details for a background that has been erased, then formulate stories through which they as descendants are connected to those ancestors. For Flowers, a sense of shared identities and the mirroring of her oppression with Lorde and Parker authorizes her relationship to these ancestors. Further, Flowers also authorizes this relationship through the meaning she gives to details about their lives and from reading their writings. From that discernment, Flowers is also at work creating a sense of self that is connected to Parker and Lorde. No, Flowers does not know Parker or Lorde personally, but her ability to critically imagine strengthens her connection to them and also strengthens the formation of her own identity and the story of the self that she links to the narrative she creates about them. Only after this work does Flowers describe a sense of shared vision and struggle with her ancestors. These details point to the authority of the reader, and the authority of the reader response, to create, discover, and/or affirm relationships to ancestors. It also demonstrates the relationship between reading the stories of others and the tools it offers for authoring one's self, a more explicit example of which follows in the next pattern detailing what descendants do with the theories of the multiplicity of identities they draw from ancestors' lives and work.

Pattern 2: Ancestors model the multiplicity of identities as a category of rhetorical analysis

The lives and writing of ancestors model for descendants how and why to use multiplicity of identities as a lens for rhetorical analysis. Perhaps more fascinating is the stimulation of literacy

processes in the discovery and application of this lens, which engenders new ways of reading the social environments as well as new ways of thinking the self. Here we see how ancestors' writing provided a model or tool by which research participants could understand their lived experiences as Black LGBTQ people and the social world around them. Ancestors' writings and lives gave rise to the ways research participants could contextualize the social environments in which their identities were formed, including the desires, pain, connection, and isolation so prevalent in ancestors' writings and lives. In some ways, a consideration of these details always has to occur alongside, if not before, a thoughtful understanding or formation of an articulated identity. Discussing the ways literacy for social change affects the self, Gwen Gorzelsky notes that some literacies are "promoting individual self-revisions" that "can potentially contribute to social change" (214). "Multiplicity," a word I borrow from Michael Hames-Garcia, is one such way of reading the social and political experience that enhances the possibility of social change ("Who" 120) which in this article is achieving rootedness in the face of historical erasure. Elsewhere I use the phrase "multiplicity of identities" in reference to an idea of identities and oppressions as praxis, meaning both theory and practice, which recovers concepts of intersectionality that have been overlooked. Through multiplicity of identities, we see an analysis of identity as multiple, simultaneous, and intersectional alongside an analysis of oppression, discrimination, and social inequalities, which are also viewed as multiple, co-constitutive, and intersecting (Pritchard 2008a; 2008b).

Looking at both scholarly and day-to-day life, we can see the ways that the multiplicity of identities is actualized as practice. For example, the Combahee River Collective, a 1970s Black feminist organization, described identities and oppressions as being on different paths that sometimes intersect and overlap and at other times are synthesized or blended. I would argue that Combahee was offering both a theory of oppression *and* of identity. In *Identity Complex*, Hames-Garcia has rightly argued that many scholars treat intersectionality as a theory of oppressions eclipsing a focus and need for a theory of identities as "mutually constitutive" (xi). Indeed, in decades of scholarly discussions of Combahee's manifesto, identity and oppression are often treated exclusively of one another. My conception of multiplicity of identities seeks to unite the original work of Combahee and the subsequent critique offered by Hames-Garcia in subsequent decades. Through this multiplicity we can explore multiple oppressions and identities in ways that do not elide the specificity of difference, but that acknowledge the intertwining of these oppressions and identities along multiple axes of power and unearned privilege.

Phylicia Craig is a Black lesbian who was born in 1970 in the Midwest and now resides in a small east coast city. Craig described how learning about the role of Black gay and lesbian activists in the 1950s and 1960s civil rights movement, particularly Bayard Rustin and Audre Lorde, provided her with insight into how homogenous ideas of Blackness silence Black queer contributions to history. These individuals modeled for Craig the need to disrupt historical erasure and processes for doing so by applying a multiplicity of identities.

While she was enrolled in a college civil rights history course called "History of African American

Leadership," Craig noticed the absence of works by women in the list of course readings. In the syllabus for the course, however, was a footnote containing referrals for optional readings about Black women. Included on that list was the name Bayard Rustin, which Craig did not recognize. Craig thought it odd that Rustin, a man, was listed, and so she sought to learn as much about him as she could. Craig discovered Rustin's role as lead organizer of the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, a moment in civil rights history that was covered extensively in the course. Given Rustin's pivotal role in the civil rights movement, Craig was very confused as to why he was not more heavily featured in the class, and she was doubly confused about why Rustin, a man, was excluded from course readings and discussions and relegated to the optional reading footnote when every other individual to be excluded in this way was female. Craig later learned that Rustin was gay. She believed that in the class Rustin "had only not been talked about because he was gay," which piqued her curiosity about the exclusion of Black LGBTQ individuals from history. She became determined to disrupt the historical erasures and the silencing of Rustin's story as a result of his gay identity.[7]

Reading works by or about Rustin and Lorde introduced Craig to the concept of a multiplicity of identities as a lens of intersectional analysis. She would later apply this lens to challenge historical frameworks and narratives that erase Black LGBTQ subjectivities by separating race from analyses of sexuality. A text Craig found especially instructive in this regard was Audre Lorde's "Learning from the 60s," from Lorde's important collection titled *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*. Here Lorde writes, "The 60s for me was a time of promise and excitement, but the 60s was also a time of isolation and frustration from within" (137). Among the challenges was the societal resistance to her identity and personhood. Lorde writes "[a]s a Black lesbian mother in an interracial marriage, there was usually some part of me guaranteed to offend everybody's comfortable prejudices of who I should be" (137). The confluence of race, gender, and sexual identity contributed to Lorde's sense of isolation and frustration with the 1960s civil rights and women's rights movements, and this same confluence threatened to silence Lorde and others, at that moment in history and in narrative. Lorde writes, "[t]hat is how I learned that if I didn't define myself for myself, I would be crunched into other people's fantasies for me and eaten alive" (137).

Refusing to deny any part of her identity, Lorde challenged the prejudice of monolithic identity by articulating a vision of radical politics built on a central premise: "[t]here is no such thing as a single-issue struggle because we do not live single-issue lives" (138). In this way, Lorde used her identities as Black, female, lesbian, and mother to present her struggle as much more complex than if it were based on only one identity, because people with multiple identity categories are undeniably a part of multiple groups. In terms of the Black freedom movement of the 1960s, and during the Black liberation struggle thereafter, Lorde says she learned an important lesson:

> unity does not mean unanimity—Black people are not some standardly digestible quantity. In order to work together we do not have to become a mix of indistinguishable particles resembling a vat of homogenized chocolate milk. Unity implies the coming together of elements which are, to begin with, varied and diverse in their particular natures. (136)

Lorde's comments illustrate multiplicity of identities by resisting monolithic notions of Blackness that ignore diversity for the sake of flat ideas of unification. Additionally, in resisting monolithic notions of Blackness in history, Lorde's comments employ multiplicity of identities as a rhetorical tool in which to expose the practice of historical erasure that is a side effect of this limited and limiting view.

Lorde's modeling of multiplicity of identities in the setting of the 1960s provided Phylicia Craig with the framework to articulate how Rustin and other Black LGBTQ people were erased from that period in history. Craig credits Rustin and Lorde's work with modeling multiplicity of identities when describing her own life-fashioning:

> Bayard Rustin and Audre Lorde. They brought the intersections and I didn't feel like they were checking stuff at the door when they were doing their work or what they wrote about So, whereas in a lot of other circumstances it was either coming from the Black lens or it was only coming from the women's lens, or maybe from the LGBT lens, there was no intersections. . . . It made me feel whole, it made me feel complete, and I appreciate how they were able to articulate that, whereas I think I understood—I had those feelings, but I didn't know how to articulate it until I could see how they did. And it doesn't mean I have to read everything that they've read or they've written or wrote or did, but I felt like it gave me like, it really affirmed my existence [T]hey used writing as a way to deal with oppression and to confront it and I was very intrigued by that.

Craig's comments indicate how ancestors provided her with language to posit a different historiography of the civil rights movement than the one implicit in the syllabus, one in which the model of multiplicity of identities is applied to expose historical erasure and reconstruct narratives in which Black LGBTQ people are visible. Further, emphasizing reading as a rhetorical practice, ancestors' writing not only articulates shared identities but also gives rise to a language or way of reading the larger world and the oppressions contained therein. What this affirms is that historical erasure is not merely an issue of identity formation, but the result of real oppressive forces in action that individuals encounter, in which they must discern the available means (reading) to shape their sense of the larger world in which historical erasure takes place.

Print culture is important not just to ancestors modeling the multiplicity of identities but also to individual intervention by descendants like Craig. In the college class where she discovered Rustin, she proposed to write a paper about him, to use his story to speculate on what else from that period an application of multiplicity of identities might reveal about the history of civil rights in the United States. In this regard, Craig's connection to her ancestor models an application of multiplicity of identities in her own writing and analysis of history, culture, and politics. Craig was determined "to convince [the professor] that this was going to be a good project for me to work on because I needed to know more about this man." When she was given permission to complete the project, Craig explained that "writing that paper was like giving me new life—it was like pumping new blood in my veins." Rustin's and Lorde's life stories fostered Craig's life-fashioning, allowing her to use her

own reading and writing to push back against historical erasure. It is important to note that this engagement with Black queer ancestors provided Craig with the tools to form and affirm her identity as well; this will be more deeply examined in my analysis of the third pattern of ancestorship.

Consider also the story of Melissa Henderson, who identifies as a Black queer woman. She was born in 1983 in a small city in the Midwest and currently lives in a large city on the west coast. She remembered learning this critical lens through ancestors and applying it to an issue she deemed oppressive. Like Phylicia Craig, Henderson said reading Lorde's *Sister Outsider* was the first time she encountered a perspective on the social world that brought multiple categories of identity to bear, and all at once. This differs greatly from Henderson's critique of other lesbian texts. For instance, as a teen she recalled reading lesbian erotica, but all the books she found focused exclusively on White women:

> I was very turned off by it I just remember not liking it. It's just like the words, the descriptions, like to read a sentence like her milky, White breasts, it just didn't resonate with me the same way that like the words from Black lesbian erotica resonated with me [I] t just felt right when I was reading the Black lesbian erotica it felt like beautiful, and almost wholesome, and I don't know, I really enjoyed it, and felt warm inside when reading it, and I don't mean because I was turned on. I just mean it felt good to read those words, as opposed to other erotica that I had read.

Henderson critiques lesbian erotica for representing lesbian sexuality exclusively through White characters, disregarding lesbian/queer women of color. In this regard, Henderson is calling out the limitations of those writings not only for a lack of treating identity as multiple and simultaneous but also for the ways this lack of recognition enables and operates as a form of oppression of the kinds of complex personhood that actually make up the social world. This type of writing assumes a single-variable framework for identity in which sexuality is emphasized, gender is emphasized, or perhaps even race is emphasized, but not the reality of one's living at the intersections of all three identities and experiences of oppression. For Henderson, Lorde's writings and the exclusions in lesbian erotica each prompted a rhetorically-oriented way of reading that illuminates and intervenes in this kind of erasure. Numerous writer-activists have echoed this critique of exclusion of Black lesbian literature in women's, lesbian, and African American literature and criticism more generally, including Jewell Gomez and Barbara Smith.[8]

Also, Henderson's assertion that reading Black lesbian erotica was more enjoyable and felt good confirms the awareness she had of multiplicity as a general reader of fiction. Reading erotica meant that Henderson was interested in reading a story about romantic or sexual encounters that gave attention to lesbian identity; however, her lived experience as an African-American is also a part of her ways of reading books and her social world. Thus, she brings to her reading of books, and indeed the world in which she lives, a concern about identities as intersectional and a desire to see that complexity reflected in her reading. Henderson's comments thus point toward the importance of multiplicity not only for how we theorize the role of identity in reading practices, but also for

writing about diversity of experiences, and in her particular case, lesbian experiences as depicted in erotic novels. As was the case with Phylicia Craig, Henderson's reading demonstrates the rhetorical dimension to her literacy practice in that her reading practices show more than the ways literacy mobilizes her identity formation, but that implicit to that practice is a dialectic and dialogic process through which she fashions her sense of the larger world in which her identity and critiques around the absence of diversity in lesbian erotica are both formed. Such work is crucial for uncovering or enabling a way of reading and writing people's lives that is ultimately affirming of the complexity of one's own identity and experience.

Pattern 3: Descendants' identity formation/affirmation is affected by an ancestors' writing and lives

Whereas pattern 2 emphasizes the ways ancestors' writing and lives inspired research participants to apply multiplicity of identities as a category of analysis, pattern 3 shows the role of those writings in the formation and affirmation of research participants' identities. One such individual, Michael Adkins, encountered his ancestors at a crossroads in his identity development as a Black gay man. Adkins was born in 1983 in a small town in the southwest and now lives in the southeast. He recalls that before and during his college career he had little opportunity to "read very many Black writers . . . let alone Black gay writers." During his junior year in college, an English professor assigned some of James Baldwin's work. Adkins described reading Baldwin as having a "significant" impact on his identity. He said,

> I grew up and didn't have any problems being Black, but it always kind of annoyed me being 'Other' defined as a Black kid Being gay it's like damn that's certainly another 'Other' defining moment. I just very rarely saw the two [being Black and gay] intersect Coming out I was like, oh my God, I hope I'm not the only Black gay man on the Planet." Baldwin's sexuality was not the reason for his inclusion in the readings for the course, nor did the class discussion address it. Nevertheless, Adkins was intrigued by the themes of masculinity and homosexuality in the author's writing, so he followed up by paying close attention to them in his extracurricular reading and looking up more information about Baldwin and his work. Adkins said "learning about and reading Baldwin was very normalizing.

Adkins' anecdote describes another link between ancestry and literacy: the negotiation and affirmation of one's identities, which is a different act from pattern 2's focus on using the links between ancestry and literacy to form a lens through which individuals read the larger world. In this link the function of literacy is reflective of Min Zhan-Lu's observations about "critical affirmation as a trope for literacy" through which we "mark writing," and in the case of my study, reading, "as a site for reflecting on and revising one's sense of self, one's relations with others, and the conditions of one's life" (173). This practice is more intimately about research participant's own identity formation and affirmation, which is related to but different from considering the ways in which they understand the larger world in which those identities are actualized. For my research participants, this critical affirmation is realized in reading an ancestor's works, viewing photographs, or decoding

an ancestor's life in historical contexts, all of which promote access to models of life-fashioning and representations of Black queerness. As with all of humanity, these individuals are situated in multiple histories, cultures, and politics, leaving them to confront any number of dominant social forces when attempting to affirm all of their identities. Lacking immediate access to precedents for ways of being, knowing, making, and doing worsens this dilemma. Thus, ancestors illuminate paths for Black queers that historical erasure and silence have hidden or made inaccessible. Remember that neither the course nor the instructor embraced or facilitated Adkins's engagement with his Black queer forebears and his identity affirmation. Adkins's developing sense of self, as well as the incident of historical erasure he experienced, call forth forms of reading that make Black queerness more visible despite attempts to overlook it. This silence around Baldwin's sexuality or themes around queerness in Adkins' class is typical of the way that society ignores the specific lived experiences of queer students of color and of the intersections of racial, sexual, and gender identities in discussions of diversity and difference. Adkins's experiences, then, represent the numerous acts of othering that take place in classrooms every day. Such erasures are a silence around raced queerness that cut off the possibility of students like Adkins seeing some aspects of their own experience portrayed at all; and when they are portrayed, it is not in a multi-dimensional way but in one that is prone to stereotype and pathology. The consequences are detrimental to Black queer identity formation and affirmation.

Cicely Davis, a Black bisexual woman, was born in 1977 in a large city in the south. Davis first learned of Black lesbian and gay writers Audre Lorde and Essex Hemphill when she attended a reading group sponsored by a Black lesbian community organization. Davis said the work of Lorde, Hemphill, and other Black queer writers "impacted me hugely." Lorde's "Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference" discusses the intersections of identities and makes an argument for the celebration of difference (114-23). An essay titled "Loyalty" in Hemphill's collection *Ceremonies: Poetry and Prose* describes the complexities of negotiating multiple identities as Black and gay (69-71). In this essay, Hemphill confronts the notion that Blackness and gayness are disconnected in an individual's experience. He also argues against the notion that identity categories are so independent as to be disconnected in movements for justice and equality. This is an important perspective for someone like Cicely Davis, who was looking for ways to affirm the various aspects of her identity, particularly her race and bisexuality.

In "Loyalty," Hemphill discusses the plight of Black gay men who have been made invisible in the Black community because of heteronormative notions of Black gender and sexuality, saying "I speak for thousands, perhaps hundreds of thousands of men who live and die in the shadows of secrets, unable to speak of the love that helps them endure and contribute to their race" (70). These Black gay men are silenced, and "[t]heir ordinary kisses, stolen or shared behind facades of heroic achievement are scrubbed away by the propaganda makers of the race who would just as soon have us believe Black people can fly, rather than reveal that Black men have been longing to kiss one another, and have done so, for centuries" (70). Hemphill argues that this heteronormativity is nothing but "futile exercises in denial" (70). Rather than be run out of their communities for their

difference or acquiesce and conceal any aspect of their identities, Hemphill claims that Black queers "will not go away with our issues of sexuality. We are coming home" (70). Through this refusal, Black queers move to create community and a sense of identity outside of the oppressive boundaries of single variable notions of identity by embracing both their race and their sexuality.

While the focus of Hemphill's "Loyalty" is Black gay men, his words model the ways anyone can embrace race and sexuality on one's own terms. Davis applied this to her own specific circumstances as a Black bisexual woman. She spoke to the effects of Hemphill and Lorde's work on the formation and affirmation of her identity:

> because of their fearlessness, I felt empowered when I read their writings, and at the same time I had a responsibility, because most of them couldn't be as 'Out' as I could be in this day and age I can't think of any better word but just empowerment from it. Just that they were so bold and so brave to write the way that they did when they did. And, that I was able to kind of reach back because both sides of my family thought it would be important to remember where we came from And, we always have family reunions, and we're always paying respect to the older people in the family when they're still alive, and now that some of them are gone, it's always been real important to me to remember my history. So, it was like, now that I can add these Black queer people to my forefathers and mothers is just like Martin Luther King, and Malcolm X and all the people I learned about growing up. And, now there's like a whole body of queer people that were Black . . . [who] contributed to the life that I live today.

Although the setting in which Davis first discovered her Black LGBTQ ancestors and forebears—a Black lesbian discussion group—already hailed Black queerness, it is important to examine how Davis's identity was formed and affirmed by her engaging with forebears through literacy. For instance, she states that the oppression her ancestors experienced issued her a mandate to be out, to be proud, and to represent all of her identities. Davis accessed ancestors' descriptions of oppression to form and affirm her own sense of self, and in doing so she affirmed the role of literacy in that process. She uses the word "empowering" to describe this identity affirmation—the same word used by many other research participants when discussing the impact of ancestors on the formation of their identity.

It is also important to note that Davis first learned of Hemphill and Lorde through a community organization. This is significant, because it shifts the pedagogical scene away from the classroom, inviting us to imagine—just as we imagine identities as intertwined—the pedagogical possibilities of school and out-of-school spaces in tandem instead of mutually exclusive. Community organizations could help to identify resources about Black and other queer of color subjectivities, which may prove useful to instructors wishing to incorporate these matters into the classroom. In addition, Davis and the other participants in her group were adults. This emphasizes the significance of identity in adult literacy programs. By accessing Black queer history and culture, Davis's reading group fostered an environment where critical literacies and identity formation and affirmation were successfully

intertwined for Black queer adults. These actions represent possibilities for pedagogical depth that teacher-scholars of literacy education—particularly teachers of adults—may not have imagined.

Pattern 4: Descendants receive cross-generational mandates to become ancestors through literacy

In "Learning from the 60s," Audre Lorde writes, "Black people have been here before us and survived. We can read their lives like signposts on the road and find . . . that each one of us is here because somebody before us did something to make it possible. . . . We have the power those who came before us have given us, to move beyond the place where they were standing" (138, 144). Here Lorde talks about descendants finding power in knowing in the midst of "the hard work of becoming ourselves" (138), that our ancestors have blazed a trail for their descendants to follow. Whenever descendants recognize the path that has been created, Lorde says, we are drawing from our ancestors to "move beyond the place where they were standing" (144). Implicit in Lorde's comments is the sense that, instead of honoring the ancestors simply by looking out for one's self, one has a responsibility to leave behind tools of one's own so that future generations may move beyond the place where they are currently standing. This sentiment of a sense of responsibility to those who follow was shared among research participants. As the following examples show, the role of literacy in hearing and acting on that responsibility is paramount.

Two powerful themes that were common across participants' life stories were the sense of sharing a continuum of literate and rhetorical practices with ancestors and the concept of one's own role as a future ancestor. Descendants see the uses of literacy in their own lives as mandates to be a source of power and knowledge for future generations of Black LGBTQ people, just as the ancestors' life and works had been to them. Citing Robert Plant Armstrong, Ed Pavlic describes such cyclical relations as "syndesis," which Armstrong uses "to account for the multidirectional relationship between 'ancestors' and 'descendants' in Yoruba ritual aesthetics" (21). Pavlic continues:

> Armstrong describes cultural systems organized by aligning voices or rhythms in multiple layers of repeating cycles. "New" cultural performances explore various combinations of previous cycles and improvise changes in the existing patterns. This adds new patterns that continue to coexist with previous ones. The result is a multilayered ritual present that relates, through the consciousness of performers and audiences, to preexisting voices. Syndesis creates a fluid and dynamic relationship between repetition and variation, as well as between past and present. The interplay between repetition and variation situates the past emerging in the consciousness of participants in a fluid but structured milieu. (22)

Ancestors and descendants are linked through complex relations of shared and different identities; they occupy a continuum of consciousness invoked in and created by their communicative practices. Awareness can be triggered by the ancestor's life, writings, or other symbolic representations that urge descendants to make meaning about and respond to the ancestor's life and work. The descendants' response to mandates from ancestors ranges from resisting present oppression and acting on their own fantasies to making life better for future generations of Black LGBTQ people

and leaving their own messages behind. I am reminded here of Mikhail Bakhtin's "chain of speech communion," a concept that describes transmissions of discourse as a "refraction of utterances, each one anticipating the next" (75-76). These utterances are "rejoinder[s] in dialogue that are oriented toward the response of the other (others), toward his active responsive understanding, which can assume various forms . . . the work is a link in the chain of speech communion . . . related to other work-utterances: both those to which it responds and those that respond to it" (76).

Yolanda Moore perfectly exemplifies the cross-generational cycle between ancestors and descendants. She claimed that the ancestors had a profound impact on her identity development, the articulation of her identities, and her literacy learning and practices. Her account was an important departure from those of other interviewees: while many participants detailed the role of literacy in inventing and engaging with ancestors, with Moore it was the ancestors who conditioned her literacy, indicating the ways her uses of literacy fit along a cross-generational continuum.

Moore is a Black lesbian who was born in a rural Southern town in 1958 and who currently resides in a large Southern city. She struggled to accept that she was a lesbian and then come out to her family and friends. She cited Bayard Rustin and Audre Lorde as chief among those who helped her during that time. As a member of the very active Black LGBTQ community in her city, she learned about Rustin and Lorde at two separate annual awards programs. At one event, Moore read a program with information about Rustin, whom she claims was the first Black LGBTQ person she had ever read about. After attending an awards program for Lorde, Moore began reading everything she could find that was written by or about her or her work:

> This immediately empowered me about 50,000%. I mean it was so self-affirming I mean this sister was a trailblazer. We're talking about, you know, in the 1950s, you know, when there was much, much, much homophobia going on . . . in the 1950s, in the midst of all the racial issues that were going on and all the external stuff that she had to deal with. Certainly then there's room for me and acceptance for who I am. So, it was really affirming for me to read about her and to understand that, you know, the struggle does continue and it's incumbent upon me to be the best broadcaster that I can, you know. It's kind of like an honor for me to even identify with her as an activist, as a warrior, as a mother, as a wife. She was just all that! And so it was very empowering for me.

Through her assertion that "the struggle does continue and it's incumbent upon me to be the best broadcaster that I can," Moore identifies the mandate that she spread the knowledge she has received so that she might also alert and empower others. She calls attention to the cyclical nature of the ancestor-descendant relationship, whereby the descendant's responsiveness to the ancestor entails making accessible to future generations the knowledge of their heritage. Moore reflected:

> The writing reminds me that those who have come before me, I have their blessings, and it's a true testament and an honor to them that those that come after them identify so closely with their struggle . . . I see it as part of the way I am, and that whatever struggles that I must endure, that it somehow makes it easier for the next sisters who come along, you

> know, that I've been in corporate America for a significant part of my life, so when the next young woman comes along . . . perhaps her journey won't be as strenuous as mine was because, you know, Mr. Corporate America has seen a lesbian and understands that, you know, she's competent; she's capable; she's professional, and so perhaps the next young woman won't have to, you know, reinvent the wheel for these people. It's kind of hard to see. The generational legacy they would need to free, untangle that, and hopefully, it will be a little bit better for the next sister who comes along that identifies in the same way that I did.

To Moore, the work of the ancestors aided her own struggle, and she is grateful to them for making her life better. She describes her continuation of their work as an honor and a duty that the ancestors have bestowed on her generation of Black LGBTQ people. For example, as an expression of that gratitude that further shows the role of literacy, Moore has worked as an active leader in a community writing group and book club in which she shares her own work and exposes other Black lesbian, bisexual, and queer women to these same works by which she has been touched. Here she reveals her awareness of and responsibility to her own descendants, those who may invoke her and her accomplishments just as she did with Rustin and Lorde. In doing this work, Moore has been especially able to serve as a mentor to many of the younger women who have joined the group, a relationship that helps her to inspire someone else in the ways that the ancestors have inspired her. A primary lesson she imparts to these women is that they too must pay their thanks to her in the form of connecting someone else to the ancestors and to the community. As such, Moore is acting on the continuum in both her own work and also in inspiring the next generation of Black lesbian, bisexual, and queer women in her writing and reading groups to do the same. Overall, Moore's comments and actions exemplify putting critical imagination to use to promote the positive effects of a cross-generational continuum through reading and writing to form connections to ancestors and to the future in the face of historical erasure.

"Relationships between literacy, ancestors, and the relics of history are central to what we may consider culturally relevant teaching."

CONCLUSION

Literacy is central to establishing one's links to a historical precedent, creating a framework that embraces a multiplicity of identities to form and affirm those identities. These historical precedents were most often manifested in the form of an ancestor. Given the adverse effects of historical erasure, the interventions described by my interviewees enact a form of personal and social change. One implication of this article pertains to the role of ancestorship in the future of literacy and composition pedagogy. I was intrigued to learn that not only are ancestors ambassadors of literacy for survival and resistance, but ancestors' relationships to descendants could be characterized by and stimulate

specific literacy activities. As researchers and teachers of human communication (most broadly defined), we are responsible for maintaining focus on what Gloria Ladson-Billings called *culturally relevant pedagogy*: the theory and praxis of teaching grounded in the social, political, cultural, and historical registers and resonances with students (Ladson-Billings). Still, as Timothy Barnett notes, far too many "critical pedagogues do address the links between the personal and social critique but fail to fully explore a critical pedagogy tied to personal experience" (356). Barnett argues, and I concur, that, "readers (and writers, I argue) need intense emotional involvement in their reading if they are to use texts to reconstruct themselves as critical subjects" (357).

My analysis of ancestorship developed through literacy points toward one potential area to further tie literacy and composition to personal experience, while also using the deeply emotional resonances students may have with historical erasure and intervention into such practices as a starting point on which to draft new lessons, assignments, peer-talk about writing, and students' trying on various positions from which to engage in social, political, and cultural critique. Relationships between literacy, ancestors, and the relics of history are central to what we may consider culturally relevant teaching. These relationships are central because they provide the technologies or tools by which teachers may engage their students in a more relevant and efficient way, essentially meeting students where they are. Accepting this point, we are also called as scholar-teachers, and may share with our students, the impulse to resist attempts to classify the cultural centrality of ancestors as "discredited knowledge," for such attempts are bound up in and amplify dismissive attitudes toward a particular community's culturally situated knowledge (Morrison 342). In this article, discredited knowledge includes the discrediting of ancestor knowledge as specific form of historical erasure, as well as the overlooked histories and cultural practices that are disappeared in the fissures created by the separation of blackness and queerness. Instead, instances of so-called superstition and magic must be seen as yet "another way of knowing things" that is "enhancing, not limiting" (Morrison 342). Some ways to meet this goal include reinstating the centrality of ancestry as germane to discourses of cultural relevance in classrooms and reimagining what this could mean for assignments and student mentoring. It also opens doors to new hermeneutics that acknowledge and resist the consequences of historical literacy learning and practices, as well as the culturally specific values and assumptions communities have about literacy.

Another implication of my findings on curricula is that ancestors are not manifested in literacy practices for everyone in the same way, if at all, even though the focus of this study was research participants who are able to appeal to literacy and written texts in order to connect with ancestors (as described by the four patterns of Black queer ancestorship developed through literacy). However—and not to diminish the weight of my results—I hope that my analysis will inspire creative and generative discussions about the pedagogical strategies that might be employed regarding those for whom ancestorship is not relevant. In short, historical erasure is harmful. In general, it is imperative to mine various conceptions of historical erasure and ancestorship to determine the unique relationships that different communities have with history and the ways those relationships hinder

or strengthen reading, writing, and other areas of communicative growth, especially in relationship to identity formation and affirmation. For my own part, my larger study places more emphasis on examining historical rootedness among individuals who have no relationships with print texts or formal educational institutions and among those who remain excluded from queer communities—namely, transgender people—who often have to search elsewhere for ancestors who reflect their own lived experiences. These nuances deepen the claims I make in this article, and they also address aspects of ancestorship that require even greater attention to the complexity of intersectionality that connects Black LGBTQ identity more deliberately to class, educational background, age, or region.

My use of identity theory offers additional implications for literacy and composition studies. In particular, by examining race with sexuality, I apply intersectional and queer-of-color theories to promote a conversation within literacy and composition studies. Scholars of literacy, composition, and rhetoric have employed the conceptual lens of intersectionality in their research, especially concerning Black feminist literacy and rhetorical studies.[9] This concept of intersectionality differs greatly from those theories that examine "identity myopia" (Wallace 521), which views identities as flattened, mutually exclusive categories. Identity myopia applied to Black and LGBTQ identities helps to explain the historical erasure of Black LGBTQ people. An effect of this identity myopia on literacy and composition theory, then, has been the development of theories of race and queerness that exclude one another. That is, with very rare exceptions, critical race and LGBTQ theoretical and pedagogical perspectives in literacy and composition studies have not been linked in the scholarly discourse of composition and rhetoric in a sustained way. As a result, very little research in literacy, composition, and rhetorical studies has been published about LGBTQ people of color. For my part, the larger study from which this article is drawn will be the first book-length study in the field to focus exclusively on Black LGBTQ people's literacy and rhetorical practices, joining the scholarly discourses of African American and LGBTQ literacy and rhetoric in a sustained theoretical, historical, and pedagogical analysis.

Detailing major shifts in the use and disregard of queer theory in composition studies, Jonathan Alexander and David Wallace write that the "transformative power" of queerness "may be even more powerful when considered together with important axes of identity, such as gender, race, class, physical and mental/emotional abledness, spirituality, and age" (301). As it stands, despite critical, intellectual discussions of queerness in composition studies, there is a dearth of scholarship theorizing queerness in relationship to the other "axes of identity." Consequently, there is a dearth of published scholarship examining the convergence of race and sexuality. Two exceptions in the field of composition and rhetoric are Harriet Malinowitz's study (1995) of lesbian and gay student writers, which devotes two chapters of case study on a Black gay man and Latina lesbian, as well as Gwendolyn Pough's study (2004), which gives some attention to the politics of Black queer sexualities in the cultural productions (music videos, memoir, rap lyricism) of Black women in hip hop. Still, the limited amount of attention to LGBTQ people of color in composition and rhetoric is surprising for a number of reasons. First, there has been significant opposition to queer theories that

ignore race, including by white queer theorists who have asserted the value of a critique of race in queer theories; regardless, this has not become the trajectory in studies of composition and rhetoric. Second, as stated earlier, scholars in the field already employ intersectionality and other theories of complex personhood. These two points should promote literacy and rhetoric examinations that are centered on complex identity theories. My analysis of how identity myopia produces historical erasure (see pattern #3) is an example of an examination of the intersection of race and sexuality; such intersections, including of Blackness and queerness, should be examined further in relation to literacy, composition, and rhetoric.

That ancestors have been vital to the learning, meaning, and use of literacy by my research participants emphasizes that ancestry is an important feature of Black queer literacy traditions. This study speaks to, and yet challenges, the body of scholarship that has examined the roles of intellectual and cultural heritage on literacy learning and practice. My findings encourage further exploration of the roles of ancestors and other potentially overlooked artifacts of cultural heritage in literacy in other communities, especially those communities where ancestors and elders occupy positions of prominence. If we are willing to listen, the voices of ancestors will engage us in discussions about where we have been, where we are, and where we might go.[10]

NOTES

[1] I use pseudonyms for names and locations throughout the study to protect the confidentiality of research participants. Following the model of Kath Weston, and further employed by Mignon Moore, I provide each participant a last name to indicate an adulthood and a social status that people of color, LGBTQ folks, and other marginalized populations are often denied.

[2] A more detailed discussion of life-fashioning appears in my larger study.

[3] All interviews explored the topics below, yielding the four patterns of ancestorship I theorize in this article:

Identity
Memories and other significant events in the coming out process.
Persons associated with coming out process.
Influential Black or LGBTQ people.
Role of friendship and family to your Black LGBTQ identity.

Literacy
Memories of writing/reading associated with race and sexuality.
Memories of writing/reading during coming out process.
People associated with writing/reading.
Types of writing/reading shared and public.
Types of writing/reading private.

Reading and Writing Today
Motivations for reading/writing.
Consequences for reading/writing.

[4] See Charmaz; Glaser and Strauss; and Strauss and Corbin.

[5] Scholars in many fields and discplines, especially historians, recognize that there are whole histories of groups that remain relatively unknown and remain erased from the dominant historical narratives. I would argue that this historical erasure always implicates the use of literacy in that it is through acts of (mis)reading and (mis)writing that such omissions occur. Literacy studies is uniquely positioned to recognize and address these historical erasures, as well as provide a nuanced analysis of the various ways literacy is used to interrupt historical erasure too.

[6] See Creel; Kopytoff ; Stuckey; and Thompson.

[7] See film by Kates and Singer. See also D'Emilio.

[8] See Gomez, "Cultural" and "Some." See also Smith.

[9] See Logan; Comfort; Royster; Richardson; and Pough.

[10] I would like to thank Susan Zaeske, Catherine Prendergast, Deborah Brandt, Craig Werner, the LiCS editorial team and the anonymous peer reviewers for their helpful comments on earlier drafts of this article.

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Literacy Brokers and the Emotional Work of Mediation

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ABSTRACT

Literacy brokers—defined as people who assist others with reading and writing—have gained increasing attention in Literacy and Composition Studies (for example, Jerskey; Lillis and Curry; Lunsford). Yet their analytical richness has been marginally examined or subsumed under already established terms such as *sponsors of literacy*. This essay seeks to reclaim the significance of literacy brokers in doing critical emotional work through what I call *literacy as affinity*. In this ethnographic study of transnational literacies of Romanian immigrants, I show that as literacy brokers move across contexts, they accumulate knowledge and develop a bi-institutional perspective. In doing so, these brokers serve more than instrumental ends; they perform literacy as affinity by brokering personal experiences and languages of nation-states and by participating in advocacy for the sake of others.

KEYWORDS

literacy/language broker, transnational literacy, affinity, emotional work

> "We pleaded our case. I read a few stories. I read a few letters that I received from people in the refugee camps. And I said, "Look, these are stories from our people. They escaped from Communist Romania. If we do not do the papers for them to come to the United States, they'll be sent back to Romania and they'll be imprisoned."
>
> (Eugen, an American of Romanian heritage)

Eugen, a former political refugee from Romania, now a US citizen, is aware of the power of writing a personal story. Eugen learned to write in a rather unexpected way—through drafting immigration documents for other people, including their stories of oppression. With these stories, he also appealed to not-for-profit organizations advocating for the cause of many other asylum seekers stranded in refugee camps in Europe. Different from the work one might do in a typical writing classroom,

Eugen would write in the high-stakes context of US immigration, where his literate actions generated life-long consequences for many immigrants. Eugen is what we might call a "literacy broker," a go-to person in the community in regards to documents, writing, immigration, and other issues. The term "literacy broker" has gained much traction in New Literacy Studies (NLS), especially in cross-cultural studies of literacy (for example, Baynham; Kalman; Papen, "Literacy Mediators"). In a rather comprehensive definition, Kristen Perry defines literacy brokering as "a process of seeking and/or providing informal assistance about some aspect of a given text or literacy practice. Brokers bridge linguistic, cultural, and textual divides for others" (256). While current work on literacy brokers underscores their instrumental roles as translators, scribes, or helpers with texts, in this essay I draw attention to literacy brokers' emotional work, performed in mediating texts locally and transnationally.

Literacy mediation has been studied in multiple social contexts, such as tourism businesses in Namibia (Papen, "Literacy Mediators"), the public plaza in Mexico (Kalman), academic publishing of multilingual scholars (Lillis and Curry), a Moroccan community in London (Baynham), and others. A large body of research focusing specifically on language brokering—which, based on Perry's definition, has been subsumed under the broader term of literacy brokering—has been conducted on children of immigrants translating or interpreting for their parents (C. Chu; Orellana, Meza, and Pietsch; Tse). This work contributes to a broad understanding of various social contexts where literacy mediators operate. Building on this scholarship, in this ethnographic study of Romanian immigrants in the US, I argue that literacy brokers assume more complex roles and responsibilities; they also shift positions, accumulating knowledge from multiple contexts where they broker texts, languages, or cultural gaps. Most importantly, I contend that literacy brokering implicates emotional work, or what I call *literacy as affinity*—a discursive repertoire comprised of language of empathy, personal experiences, and even social relations embedded in the literate experience. Many writing contexts, particularly institutional sites—such as work places, governmental agencies, courtrooms, schools and so on—aim to streamline communication, and in doing so remove the emotional fabric that often sustains or enhances literacy practices. Literacy brokers, I argue, intervene with significant emotional work that ultimately cultivates human understanding through language and literacy.

I use the term "affinity" as almost synonymous with emotion, with the former offering a broader umbrella concept that captures how emotions manifest in language use, in personal stories that people share, and certainly in relations between people. The study of emotion posits some challenges, precisely because it has been historically defined as oppositional to rationality: "something natural rather than cultural, irrational rather than rational, chaotic rather than ordered, subjective rather than universal, physical rather than mental or intellectual, unintended and uncontrollable, and hence often dangerous" (Lutz 69). Yet Julie Lindquist reminds us that "emotions are situated and constructed," connected to all aspects of the social (201). Lynn Worsham also defines emotion as "the tight braid of affect and judgment, socially and historically constructed and bodily lived, through which the symbolic takes hold of and binds the individual, in complex and contradictory ways, to the

social order and its structure of meanings" (216). Based on these definitions, emotions are integral components in the fabric of everyday life, entangled in how people think, speak, and act socially and historically. Central to my conception of emotion is Laura Micciche's explanation of "emotion as a valuable rhetorical resource" (*Doing Emotion* 1). Rather than just expressions of personal feelings, emotions have rhetorical force intersecting and shaping personal and interpersonal, social and political realities. Yet what studies on emotion show is that emotions are also tied, managed, or regimented particularly in the context of institutions; in Megan Boler's words, "within education, as in the wider culture, emotions are a site of social control" (xiv). Educational institutions are such locations where, as Jennifer Trainor explains, affective experiences are being constructed or managed. In exploring connections between emotions and racism, Trainor further shows how language, particularly in institutional contexts, engenders "emotional regulation" (85). Similarly, Julie Lindquist contends that institutions must acknowledge the "emotional labor" of writing teachers and the emotional formations that emerge in the writing classroom (189). In the context of immigration and bureaucratic practices, institutional constraint operates by the state officials' overemphasis on procedural knowledge rather than emotion: what forms to use for what purpose and how to fill out a given form in the most efficient way. For these types of tasks—filling out forms, translating, writing documents, and others—literacy brokers have been conceived as tools serving very specific literate ends. And similar to Lindquist's example of the writing classroom, emotional work in these bureaucratic writing contexts, including immigration applications, has been controlled and managed. In this study, I aim to show that literacy brokers recover emotional work lost in the context of immigration, and in doing so they humanize a system that otherwise tends to reduce immigrants to "case studies." Since literacy brokers hold multiple positions and develop bi-institutional perspectives—a concept I will develop later in this essay—they perform emotional work in the following ways: 1) through their own experiences of migration, they are able to tap into these personal narratives when they assist others with their literate immigration experiences; 2) when institutions prescribe ways of being, reading, and writing, literacy brokers are attuned to emotional regimentation and regulations since they function "across" institutions. This means that sometimes brokers work from within institutions, and sometimes they act from outside institutions. This process of changing perspectives, of adopting an emic viewpoint and alternating it with an etic angle, allows literacy brokers to develop a critical stance of institutional language and to recover the loss of affective discursive experiences.

"Many writing contexts, particularly institutional sites—such as work places, governmental agencies, courtrooms, schools and so on—aim to streamline communication and in doing so, remove the emotional fabric that often sustains or enhances literacy practices. Literacy brokers, I argue, intervene with significant emotional work that ultimately cultivates human understanding through language and literacy."

Since literacy brokers in this study emerged as significant players in the lives of immigrants, particularly in the process of acquiring US citizenship, I examine their role in mediating and mitigating the force of state powers as these immigrants negotiate textual paths through the languages of institutions and nation-states.[1] Specifically, I analyze here the literacy histories of Romanian immigrants who escaped Romania before 1989, when Romania was still under Communist rule. Representing a profile of mobile subjectivity, these Romanian immigrants' narratives reveal strategies used to negotiate both internal and external boundaries during the Cold War era. Romania's 40-year period of cultural and political isolation is reflected in the ways in which these immigrants broker language and literacy restrictions as well as the rhetorics of nation-states. Having experienced the control of a totalitarian regime, Romanian immigrants perceive the state as both rigid and flexible, the challenge being to negotiate the in-between space of these extremes. The Romanian emigration/immigration in the 1970s and 1980s must be understood in terms of economic benefits and human rights advocacy, as these refugees were allowed for the most part to leave the country on grounds of religious, ethnic, or political persecution; many of them were given a passport and permission to depart, only as a result of significant international transactions and trade benefits that Western countries, including the US, initiated with Romania. Although the US and Romania had divergent interests—the US was concerned with the lobbying of human rights, Romania with extracting economic benefits from the US through the Most Favored Nation status[2] (MFN)—the US became one of the main destinations for Romanian refugees.[3] These refugees found themselves navigating both Romanian emigration restrictions and US immigration qualifications.

In the context of US Immigration and Citizenship Services[4] (USCIS), the pursuit of legal papers creates a discursive market entangling individuals and state powers in complex ways. This market of legal papers regulated through forms, applications, or affidavits allows little room for the individual to negotiate his or her interaction with the state. Since in an immigration context, an alien seeking to obtain US citizenship must have a sponsor, and since in Composition and Literacy Studies the notion of sponsors of literacy (Brandt, "Sponsors") is a widely-used analytical concept, a brief explanation of terminology is necessary. Deborah Brandt defines sponsors of literacy as "any agents, local or distant, concrete or abstract, who enable, support, teach, model, as well as recruit, regulate, suppress, or withhold literacy—and gain advantage by it in some way" ("Sponsors" 166). In the context of US immigration, the notion of sponsorship implicates mobility, national identities, and access through one's mediating role. Specifically, to sponsor someone in the immigration discourse means "to bring to the US or 'petition for'" a particular individual (US Dept. of Homeland Security). Thus, a sponsor supports the action and the process of moving one from a place to another, in this case, a foreign national's mobility to the US. Whether the petition supports a family member, potential employee, or asylum seeker, a sponsor is crucial in the pursuit of legal papers. Without a sponsor and an affidavit of support from a sponsor, the application is incomplete and cannot be processed.

Despite the central role of sponsors in the context of immigration, in this study, literacy brokers surfaced as significant actors in day-to-day interactions. Based on my participants' accounts, literacy

brokers are the ones who participate in the moment-by-moment interactions brokering texts, such as applications, declarations, documentation, and knowledge gaps between the immigrant and state rhetorics. In immigration papers, the sponsor often remains a formal inscription on a document, responding to governmental constraints but in reality achieving no significant impact on the petitioner. Framed by US state stipulations, the sponsor involved in the petition process has to be a US citizen and must show evidence of sufficient income to support another person. On the other hand, literacy brokers are less visible, almost invisible in formal papers, yet their role shapes the processing of legal papers in significant ways. Unlike the sponsors who want their name acknowledged, as in the case of commercials that inspired Brandt's ("Sponsors") choice of the sponsor metaphor, literacy brokers remain rather obscure in formal, institutionalized sites of writing. I distinguish their lack of visibility from that of ghostwriters, also discussed in Brandt's "When People Write for Pay." While literacy brokers are rather invisible, they certainly do not seek to impersonate someone else as ghostwriters do. Rather, their lack of prominence comes from their mundane roles and from lack of attention to mediation, especially when the focus is on the literate goal to be accomplished rather than on the person who is facilitating the mediation. In the immigrants' experience, the literacy broker surfaces where there are gaps between what an individual has to accomplish and the scarcity of available resources for that goal. Beyond brokers' instrumental roles, I highlight their affective work, deeply intertwined in the process of migration and in other institutionalized contexts of writing.

LITERACY BROKERS: BACKGROUND & PROFILES

Data for the current study come from a larger ethnographic project focused on transnational literacies of Romanian immigrants in the Midwest area, particularly living in a large Midwest metropolis and its surrounding suburbs. Given Romania's history of closed borders before 1989, the official fall of the Communist regime in this country, I divided the participants into two categories: old immigrants who left the country before 1989 and new immigrants, who arrived in the US after 1990. Data for the present study, consisting of thirteen literacy histories, come primarily from old immigrants who came to the US under the category of refugee in the 1970s and 1980s. In my discussion of brokers, I will mainly concentrate on four participants (see Table 1) who have taken on the role of brokers in the community and illustrate the interactions with the rest of the community. Both first-hand accounts, the brokers' narratives, and second-hand sources, the community members' stories, help build the profile of these brokers, specifically their emotional work.

The centrality of literacy brokers in an immigrant community is not marked by quantity, but rather by their reputation and the large number of immigrants who call on these brokers' services. Occasionally, I rely more on one of the four brokers, Eugen, whose story I highlighted at the beginning of this essay. As someone who has occupied various brokering positions from volunteering in the community to becoming a church representative in legal affairs and working as paralegal, Eugen offered the most details about literacy brokering relative to legal papers. Given that his brokering

role of legal documents had ended, he was the most open to relating practices and events as he remembered them. The other brokers' experiences complemented details that Eugen either missed or did not recall during our interview. Although George, a different broker, agreed to participate in the study, he seemed unexpectedly hermetic in his answers. For this reason, I reference him the least. To protect the privacy of these participants, I use pseudonyms, and in the far right column of Table 1, I list arbitrarily various roles these brokers held in the community, rather than associate particular roles with particular people.

Table 1: Literacy Brokers

Literacy Brokers	Education	Education & Training	Languages	Multiple Roles in Literacy Brokering
Eugen	High school degree (Romania) Associate degree (US)	Volunteer; training on the job	Romanian, English, Italian	Former green card applicant Community volunteer Legal representative Consultant Translator Official interpreter Unofficial reporter Paralegal Legal consultant Community interpreter
Manuela	High school degree (Romania)	Training on the job; feedback from supervisor	Romanian, English	
Claudiu	College degree (Romania) Certificates (US)	Certificates, training, translation conferences; training on the job	Romanian, English, French, Hungarian	
George	College degree (Romania) College degree (US)	Training through formal education; informal training gained from interacting with community members.	Romanian English (information about speaking additional languages was not provided)	

I supplement interview data with copies of travel documents, refugee certificates, and documents pertaining to the refugees' immigrant experience shared during our interviews. Additionally, I use historical documents, particularly newspaper clippings about Romanian immigrants and Romania-US relationships in the 1980s; all of these primary documents[5] originate from the daily news in the 1970s-1980s and Radio Free Europe news broadcasts, the main source of uncensored information for many Romanians before 1989.

The immigration experience, as the participants in this study attest, is marked by numerous forms—certificates, identity cards, affidavits, letters of invitation, and many other documents specific for each category of immigration: humanitarian, family reunification, or employment. Although I

had limited access to some of these documents, they were often referenced during the interviews, either by the brokers or by the immigrants who needed the brokers' services. Table 2 includes a selection of these documents and various activities that entailed some form of literacy brokering.

Table 2: Types of Brokering Activities

Types of Documents	Activities
Forms	Filling out: green card applications, applications for citizenship, biographical forms
Legal Documents	Filling out or writing: affidavits, declarations; documenting or writing personal stories of persecution (asylum seekers) Researching and writing briefs
Consulting	*Applicants*: giving/asking for legal advice; giving /asking for advice concerning particular forms *Other entities:* consulting senators and other government officials in regards to an immigration issue Researching and writing briefs
Advocacy & Research	Interviewing people Recording and collecting stories of oppression Compiling reports Preparing briefs
***The Immigration File**	Compiling and organizing various forms into a coherent "file self": applications, birth/ marriage certificates, divorce papers, etc.; evidence of mailing addresses of applicants.

*The immigration file includes a compilation of documents and immigration forms that can be considered individually but also as a whole unit. Individual files need a particular rhetorical arrangement to make up the immigration file as single unit.

The language that surrounds the mediation process in the case of Romanian refugees includes phrases such as "helped sponsor," "helped these people come to the US," "helped them bring their families," "church representative, legal representative," "doing translations," "[doing] all kinds of legal paperwork," "advice on immigration," "we pleaded our case." These activities denote the broker as an assistant, consultant, advocate, translator, suggesting flexibility of roles and perspectives. Building on these multiple identities, the literacy broker materializes as a malleable construct permitting the creation of new meanings based on context and roles. Acknowledging this flexibility of positions and contexts, I draw attention to the dynamic nature of literacy brokering. While previous scholarship has succeeded in highlighting a multiplicity of social contexts where the brokers operate, it has been limited in capturing the brokers' complex social worlds and their literate repertoire in multiple roles. Since I have looked at brokers and their literacy histories, I have been able to capture the mobility of their positions as well as the larger forces that shaped various changes. It has been their mobility that disclosed the affinity work they perform through literacy.

BI-INSTITUTIONAL PERSPECTIVES: ACCUMULATING ROLES AND POINTS OF AFFINITY IN LITERACY BROKERING

Accumulating Knowledge, Accumulating Roles

A closer examination of the literacy broker in more than one context and with more than one role reveals the complexity of knowledge gleaned from multiple social contexts where the brokers operate. In 1987, Eugen and his family arrived in the US at the intervention of an American congressman. Three years later, Eugen became himself a broker for several other political refugees from Romania. As a broker or more precisely "the go-to" person, the actual term Eugen used to refer to his brokering activity in the Romanian immigrant community, he negotiated and mediated the mobility of religiously persecuted Evangelical Romanians in various capacities. He started as a volunteer for the World Council of Churches, for Interchurch Refugee, and for Immigration Ministries. His role became more official as the Romanian Church of which he was a member delegated Eugen as a legal representative to the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS). Eventually, Eugen started working as a paralegal for various immigration attorneys.

This shift of positions—from being a volunteer with non-profit organizations to being a church legal representative and then a paralegal—marks, on the one hand, the process of institutionalization of the broker's profile. On the other hand, it signals a shift in the roles of mediation. In previous studies of language brokering, the broker seems to be situated between institutions (Orellana, Meza, and Pietsch; Perry), but the relation between the broker and other constituents, particularly institutions, is somewhat unclear. While sometimes brokers are viewed as having specialized knowledge and representing an institutional perspective, they are often perceived as informally offering assistance (Perry). From my analysis of the broker's work, the broker almost always assumes collaboration with or works under the patronage of some type of institutional authority: as a volunteer working with human rights organizations, a legal representative working with local churches, a paralegal functioning under legal institutions such as immigration law firms. Certainly, some of these institutions are more or less hierarchical or structured, yet even when brokering takes place in rather flexible contexts, a logic of power and representation is still in place, even in such settings as an immigrant community. Since religious or ethnic persecution was the main reason invoked by Romanian refugees in leaving Romania and requesting asylum, non-profit and religious organizations and institutions such as Romanian churches in the US became central sites of support for families arriving from Romania. Various leaders in the immigrant community—Steven Bonica, the owner of the Romanian newspaper; Octavian Cojan, founding member of the Illinois Romanian-American Community organization; and Reverend Valentin Popovici, pastor at a Romanian Baptist Church—offered multiple examples of ways in which churches were actively involved in supporting immigrants, including airport pick-up, help with finding an apartment or job, or help with enrolling children in school. Whenever brokers work with institutions, they receive additional support that

endorses the broker's authority to fulfill his or her purpose of mediation. This collaboration of the broker with other institutions—humanitarian organizations and churches—points to good models of civic and public engagement. This means that brokering takes place through collaboration and joined actions. As Judy Kalman writes, writing practices that are situated locally and culturally often point to larger spaces of communication and knowledge. As brokers partner with others, they create webs of support often based on commonality of experience and quite frequently on ethnic ties. In their position of mediation, brokers harness various types of affiliations—civic, ethnic, local, or global—and channel them to accomplish goals for those individuals who need their assistance.

When Eugen and his family left Romania, his citizenship was revoked; prior to departure, he had been expelled from school and all family possessions seized by the Romanian state. Yet through these changes and shifts of identity, Eugen learned new roles and perspectives. His success in accumulating knowledge, adapting his literate skills, and establishing partnerships came from personal interactions with bureaucratic structures. His knowledge started small. It started with his personal experience and knowledge of the institutions familiar to him, which at the beginning included his family, the local ethnic community, and the church; and all of these were tied together to the Romanian state that controlled all these social groups before his departure. But from being an expatriate, Eugen became a middleman. In the refugee camp in Italy, Eugen started to translate for his family and for other Romanians refugees. After his arrival in the US, despite limited English, Eugen gradually accumulated useful knowledge and brokered partnerships with multiple stakeholders for other asylum seekers. People would ask for his advice on immigration issues at church and then inquire about his business office—which he did not have at the time—to further solicit his assistance.

In "Accumulating Literacy," Brandt explains that with changes of literacy expectations and conditions, past literate practices may resurface in current sites of literacy learning (659-660). Although Brandt's analysis refers to transformations and changes in literacy between generations, Eugen's case shows an ability to adapt his past literacy to new contexts. In addition to accumulating various literacies, such as the learning of new languages—Italian in a refugee camp in Rome or English in the US—Eugen also acquired knowledge about the languages of nation-states, about governing state powers, and about mediation. This accumulated knowledge from various roles as a literacy broker enabled Eugen to assist others with writing their own story of persecution, to help people with documents, and to work with various organizations on behalf of the refugees themselves:

> I would sit with clients just like you're sitting with me now and I would ask, I had a form, and I would ask all the questions pertaining to their situations and . . . then I would translate it in English. . . . I've become an expert in writing umm . . . writing people's stories and writing . . . umm affidavits, declarations, statements, whatever you wanna call it.

Because of his own personal experience and interactions with larger socio-political structures, Eugen has gained credibility in the Romanian community. People entrust him with their personal stories in hope of obtaining legal papers, just like Eugen did. His accumulated knowledge builds his credentials, but it also connects him to people, to their stories of oppression. Through this

accumulation of experiences, webs of knowledge are shared and used in the service of others.

Shifting Roles and Increased Institutional Constraints

As the broker accumulates knowledge from multiple contexts, interactions between brokers and institutions change, and so does the nature of these interactions. This shift is more noticeable when the same literacy broker conducts similar text-related practices—translating /interpreting, filling out forms, researching information, interviewing people, documenting stories—in various contexts, such as in the immigrant community (less structured, less bureaucratic) and in court settings or an immigration agency (highly controlled). In previous studies on literacy brokers, translators and interpreters have been consistently identified as important language brokers (Martinez et al.; Morales et al.; Tse). Yet few studies have explored how these translators may operate in multiple settings. From the beginning of my interview with Claudiu, he explained that a community interpreter is very different from an official translator/ interpreter. Claudiu, a Romanian-American citizen, owns his own translation and interpretation business, but he also serves regularly as an official translator/ interpreter in court settings as well as an informal community translator/ interpreter. In a nutshell, he clarifies that while the official jobs "pay the bills," the other one, in the community, is "the most rewarding." The reward comes, as Claudiu explains, from the ability to help. In a case implicating a community response to elderly abuse, Claudiu volunteered his service as a language interpreter because he too wanted to support this initiative as a member of the community: "I went in voluntarily and in the end, and all the way at the very end, I was offered money. I had a hard time accepting it, but I did. But that was one of those cases when I went in voluntarily, and I went in helping other people help people."

By emphasizing the constraints of the official job—the translation and interpreting in the contexts of institutions such as court settings—Claudiu also managed to capture the shifting position from working in the community to working in the confinements of an institution. In reference to his work in institutional settings, he repeatedly described his role as a "tool" and as an "instrument." Claudiu accepts his role as a "tool," although it may seem deprived of any personal or emotional dimension. The person is there to fulfill a clearly established function—in the case of interpreting in a court setting, to transmit the message exactly as is from one interlocutor to another. Based on Claudiu's account, the position of a translator or interpreter is limited to the mere rendition of the interaction "to the best of his abilities." Claudiu explained that "helping" a defendant in official interactions such as court proceedings is neither possible nor his "job." Since the broker has been framed as the one who assists, who mediates partnerships, the "help" offered by the translator/interpreter is constrained when situated in a regulated setting such as a court, particularly in immigration cases. Conceiving the literacy broker as an instrument or tool at first glance shifts agency from the broker to a model of agency embedded in systemic structures. Yet given the assumed multi-positionality of a broker, I argue that if agency is limited in one context, it can be potentially exerted in other settings. For instance, even if Claudiu cannot help someone in the context of a court setting, his knowledge

of this institutional discourse can be transferred easily to his role as a community translator. Such an understanding of brokering has not been possible in studies of brokering performed by children of immigrants, since they were studied only in the language mediation between their parents and school officials, parents and bank representatives, and others. In these studies, attention has been placed on the type of interaction or type of brokering occurring, rather than on a possible transfer of accumulated knowledge from one setting to another. While speaking multiple languages, as in the case of the interpreting/translation, is crucial in such cross-cultural interactions, in this mobility of positions I emphasize the formation of what I call a bi-institutional perspective. I define a bi-institutional perspective[7] as a way of thinking and acting not solely from "within" institutions, but "across" institutions also. I use the term "bi-institutional" rather than multi-institutional perspective[8] because often times, the prefix multi- seems to suggest an addition that increases in value with the number. My goal is to suggest that a bi-institutional perspective adds depth rather than just range. Learning and knowing the discourse of institutions—with its procedures, specialized languages, and practices—contributes to an agentic literacy broker who can manage not only multiple languages but also specialized discourses of bureaucratic structures. And since this learning and knowing includes more than one institution, the literacy broker gains multiple perspectives visible not only in actual texts, but implicit in practices and ways of thinking *across* institutions. In the example mentioned earlier when Claudiu participated as a community member in the elderly abuse case, he shifted his role to that of an interpreter and translator. He says, "I was there as both [community member and interpreter]. That's another very unique thing about the work that I do, that I can have multiple hats depending on the circumstances."

Taking on "multiple hats" allows the broker to adopt multiple roles even though they may involve unequal responsibility or degree of flexibility. Within the institution, procedures take priority over individual actions. Institutional constraint is built into these procedures, operating on multiple levels. First of all, the translator/ interpreter must take an oath. The oath in itself is a formal verbal circumscription of one's identity into the institutional context where s/he operates. To ensure accuracy of translation/interpretation, a security measure is in place when the court, especially in immigration cases, provides a second remote translator selected only from approved language service providers. In such situations, the dynamics between various parties is evidently different. The hierarchy of control is well established, and the interaction is scripted. Claudiu likened this scripted procedure to "a train, once it starts, it goes at a certain pace and unless something major happens, the train keeps rolling." This analogy with train tracks is quite potent, especially that it is language and linguistic procedures that keep the "train" going. Set on their tracks, institutions shape language and discourses especially as their role is to "keep going" and to stop only at established points of destination. Inevitably, these prescribed discursive practices constrain individual choices and actions.

In the case of the paralegal who works in an immigration office, institutional constraints are similar. At the beginning of my interview with Manuela, she described her job in terms of dos and don'ts, what is allowed and what is not:

> A paralegal cannot give legal advice; you are allowed to fill out papers, but you cannot give legal advice… [A paralegal] can write letters to immigration, can call to ask about cases that are represented by the attorney. Basically preparing many legal documents, but not any document.

When I asked whether there is flexibility in certain cases or multiple approaches, Manuela answered, "the law is the law." As a literacy broker dealing with scripted texts, particularly working with documents and official applications for immigration, Manuela confirms that the process of filling out papers is a highly regulated practice. In dealing with institutional constraints, both Claudiu and Manuela adopt the perspective of the institution that they represent. To be more specific, they adopt an institutional voice—a concept that Brandt ("Writing") identified in her study of workplace writers. The institutional voice is not reflected solely in the production of a document, but also in how these brokers speak about their jobs. Manuela is clearly emphasizing that "the law is the law" and that there is little or no room for changes or additions. Claudiu apparently functions as a tool, as one piece in the larger machinery that follows established moves and structures. However, despite the brokers' assumed institutional identity within the institution, they act as more than tools, and their mediation is more than instrumental.

"In performing this language of affinity, literacy brokers re-instill a lost sense of affiliation in the process of immigration. They perform emotional work that matters even if it is not always highly perceptible."

Language of Affinity and Empathetic Work

In both situations, that of a translator/ interpreter and that of a paralegal, the issue lies, as Claudiu well explained, with *who* hires you and under whose authority you work. Institutional control, particularly in the case of immigration, leaves little to no room for mediation as help, as was the case with the translator/ interpreter in the community. However, even in these cases of rigid or prescriptive mediation, the emotional work of mediation comes to surface. After Claudiu explained the constraints that were part of his job as a legal translator and that "help" and "assistance" had to be within the legal proceedings, he elaborated further:

> Sometimes, you feel bad for someone . . . and it's actually not my job [to help]. And sometimes, I see people, they spend two hours building a case and then they say something in like 3 seconds, and they . . . *tsss* ruin everything. But it's not my job to censor anything. I'm there actually as an instrument.

Besides the fact that Claudiu seems himself as a mere instrument who solely reports on the language exchange in a court setting, his follow-up comment—"Sometimes you *feel bad*" (emphasis mine)—reveals his affective involvement. I see this as a moment of interruption; it is not marked by an external gesture or an actual intervention of help, yet it represents a significant point of institutional critique. Generally and most of the times, there is no room for "help" in a court proceeding. But

sometimes there are moments of empathy similar to Claudiu feeling (bad) for and with his clients. While these moments do not dismantle the institutional structure, they do offer points of critique. They also profess that brokers are more than instruments, even in an institutional context that regiments people's discursive practices through patterns of communication.

Similar to Claudiu's empathetic regret, Manuela shared a moment of empathetic joy based on commonality of experience. In response to my question about the reasons for liking her job, she replied:

> Every case is specific . . . very individualized and you see the result right away. And when we receive the approval for a green card, I feel as I did when I received my own green card. Seriously. That's how I feel.

One can only assume that the moment when she got her own green card was an exhilarating experience, and thus she relives that joy through the experience of her clients. Even George, the literacy broker who offered the least details about his interaction with his clients, used language of affinity during the interview. In reference to his clients and immigration procedures, George repeatedly used the phrase "*our* Romanian" (italics mine). When discussing immigration categories based on profession, George explained that "our Romanian" can apply for this or that type of visa only if there are no US citizens or residents qualified for this position. If Manuela's moment of affinity is based on personal experience, George's affective language "*our* Romanian" indexes an affinity based on ethnic and community connectedness. Instead of referring to his clients as applicants or immigrants, George adds the possessive "our" to denote shared ethnic ties with his clients. Although a possessive adjectival phrase could be used with a neutral connotation or with sarcasm or derision, in this case the context and the experience of the utterance indicate the affective underlining layer. George is after all an immigrant himself, mingling with community members, while also working formally as an attorney of immigration. It is precisely in this context of immigration discourse that he uses a language of identification and empathy with his fellow Romanians. In performing this language of affinity, literacy brokers re-instill a lost sense of affiliation in the process of immigration. They perform emotional work that matters even if it is not always highly perceptible.

These moments of identification established on the basis of personal experience, community ties, or simply human understanding shape the profile of a broker as someone who has knowledge and experience both within systems and across institutional structures. As brokers, even those working within state or bureaucratic institutions, show affinity with the disadvantaged, with those outside of the system, they manage to humanize and soften rigid boundaries for those whose interests they represent. I argue that although unexpressed in particular actions, these affinities count as interruptions of the system. Bureaucratic systems of control are not oppressive only to the extent that they manifest in action. They are also oppressive in the way they regiment structures of feeling as well as ways of thinking. One may suggest that by choosing to work in these institutions, these individuals are in reality doing the feeling work—even if it is repressed emotions—for the oppressive structures. I argue that while they do this work from "within institutions," following institutional

rules of practices, their ability to think and act *across* institutions unlocks them from one particular role. If structures of feelings are regimented in one context, they are redistributed in other contexts, institutional or non-institutional. For instance, even if Claudiu cannot help in one particular case in a court setting, when he is privately hired by a community member he can use his experience and feelings of affiliation to engender a better outcome for that person.

One relevant example about regimented structures of feeling comes from another participant in my study, Horea, as he witnessed lack of mediation, of literacy brokering. As Horea interacted with the US bank clerks, he shared his frustrations. He explained that he was not upset that his application for opening a bank account was denied. Rather, he was outraged that several bank clerks could not *understand* or *conceive* that a man in his mid-thirties like him had not previously owned a bank account. This inability to envision a different alternative to the rules or regulations that operate in one system marks rigid thinking and rigid structures that suppress identification of any sort. It creates a gap between those in the system and those outside of the system or those familiar with a different system, reinforcing the fact that those marginalized must be kept outside. Brokers often come in and bridge these gaps. Depending on setting, they can build bridges of understanding that unlock perceptions of rigid social structures. Points of affinity are constructed through an accumulation of knowledge from multiple viewpoints, including those of institutional communication and interactions.

These points of affinity, which I conceive as moments of identification, afford an understanding of language brokering as more than just action. Language and literacy, if conceptualized as socio-cultural constructs deeply involved in the lives of people, must engage the entire personhood, not just discrete elements. This means that people do not just participate in language and literacy interactions with knowledge or particular languages but bring with them feelings, attitudes, thoughts, and often preconceptions about a particular literacy, a language event, or specific literacy contexts, such as courtrooms, banks, government agencies, and so on. In *A Rhetoric of Motives*, Kenneth Burke explains the formative effect rhetoric can have on one's attitude in situations when one's action is conscribed. Burke gives the example of a criminal who might be moved into repentance by a priest's sermon (rhetoric) even if he cannot take any particular action (50). Making this fine distinction between action and attitude, wherein attitude is defined as "an incipient act, a leaning" or predisposition, illuminates more cogently the role of attitudes, feelings, and predispositions in literacy events. Even if action may be limited or constrained by various social structures or bureaucratic formations as seen with Claudiu's train analogy, literacy brokers can effect change through attitudes of empathy and identification, albeit momentarily.

In this section I tried to show that developing a bi-institutional perspective entails mobility through various social spaces, which present themselves as somewhat rigid structures. As literacy brokers shift through various roles as volunteers or members of the community, as Eugen's examples show, they take on more institutionally-controlled roles, and in doing so they accumulate experiences, languages, cultures along the way. But they also gain different perspectives depending

on the context of their work. For example, Claudiu as a language broker and certified translator in an immigration court accumulates particular knowledge, such as familiarity with the legal system, glossary of legal terms, and procedures. Since Claudiu is also a member of the Romanian ethnic community, people from the community sometimes ask for language assistance with papers and with various other documents. And, importantly he also has experience as an immigrant himself, having gone through the naturalization process. All these multiple roles enable Claudiu to position himself as a powerful agent of mediation among multiple stakeholders. Literacy brokers also learn to sift through these perspectives, to select rhetorically useful literacy practices and recontextualize them in new contexts for themselves or for others going through similar circumstances. Through this mobility across contexts, literacy brokers develop a bi-institutional perspective that involves ways of thinking across institutions and ways of feeling across institutions. This bi-institutional perspective allows one to detach from a particular institution and to adopt a critical stance. In doing so, literacy brokers not only learn various institutional discourses and ways of thinking; they can offer an institutional critique. Although this critique is not explicit, I argue that it becomes visible in the emotional work that these brokers provide in addition to their typical mediation tasks—assistance with papers, legal advice, consulting. Through moments of affinity and language of empathy, brokers intervene between the individual and larger bureaucratic structures, precisely because they have adopted bi-institutional perspectives.

LITERACY BROKERING AND PERSONAL STORIES AS ADVOCACY

The work of literacy brokers expands beyond local or transnational communities to occasions for advocacy. From being the "go-to" person in the immigrant community, Eugen often moved on to being a "go-between." In his interactions with INS and human rights organizations such as the World Council of Churches and the International Rescue Committee, Eugen was the voice of the larger immigrant community and even of those who were still in refugee camps. In this middle position, Eugen became an advocate for the cause of refugees, pleading with non-profit organization to extend their sponsorship to other soliciting asylum seekers. After signing for the 50th person, Eugen remembers being called for a special interview with the leadership of the non-profit organizations that acted as official sponsors. "You already have fifty people. You gotta stop," was their message. But Eugen did not give up. As exemplified at the beginning of the essay, Eugen took action and advocated for more sponsorship with the help of written stories and letters from the refugees themselves:

> And we pleaded our case. And I read a few stories, I read a few letters that I received from people in the refugee camps. And I said, "Look, these are stories from our people from the refugee camps. They escaped from Communist Romania. If we do not do the papers for them to come to the United States, they'll be sent back to Romania and they'll be imprisoned."

In this situation, literacy brokers like Eugen employ personal stories to evoke emotions for the cause of marginalized groups, asylees in this case. Although not in a courtroom, Eugen takes on the task of "pleading a case," and in doing so he identifies with those for whom he advocates; in Eugen's appeal, asylees become "*our* people," and their plight in turn becomes "*our* case." In the Romanian language, the word for attorney, *avocat,* has the same root as the English word, *advocate*. The Latin root for both Romanian and English terms is *advocatus* (Latin), "one called to aid" ("Advocate"). In his position as an advocate, Eugen indeed was *aiding* other organizations in understanding the cause of Romanian asylum seekers he was representing.

"[T]he personal matters as much as the national and transnational in shaping the literate experience. Questions about whether personal experience or personal-centered genres should or should not be included in the writing classroom are superfluous. A more appropriate approach to writing would underline the complexity of writing situations in real-world contexts and the rhetorical use of personal, national, and/or transnational experiences."

In another situation, serving as a liaison for the INS, Eugen took on the advocate's role again, but this time it involved documenting and doing research abroad. His task was to document ongoing religious persecution in Romania in 1992, after the official fall of the Communist regime in 1989. Eugen's research and documentation took the shape of a report for the US Department of Justice as a way to provide evidence as to whether certain political asylum requests on the roll were still valid cases for asylum. The legitimacy of these cases was established based on evidence of religious oppression that was still taking place in Romania, even after the official socialist regime was overthrown. In preparation for this report, Eugen went back to Romania and talked to people. Concealing the real purpose of his visit, Eugen interacted with people in the streets, videotaping and audiotaping their stories:

> I documented everything, all my stories and even while walking in the streets, we were videotaping and we were audiotaping and all the stories were documented and then, when I came home, I wrote each individual story . . . and I published a booklet about 160 pages . . . [of] stories of persecution that went on in Romania even in '92.

Such a document is similar to various other texts that were presented in the House of Representatives when the Most Favored Nation[9] (MFN) trade status was frequently negotiated or under review. As in Eugen's report for the INS, several House representatives made use of personal stories to demonstrate Romania's need for the MFN status, which was directly tied to emigration from Romania (United States Congress). It was not just in the discourse of human rights organizations but also in governmental branches that the emotional work of personal stories represented an intervention with powerful economic and political implications. While the MFN affected trade benefits between Romania and the US, it also put pressure on the Romanian government to release hundreds of religious and ethnic minorities. This interconnected relationship between immigrants' personal stories of persecution

and larger governmental agencies demonstrates the need for and the centrality of literacy brokers in bridging communication between individuals and larger structures. It also shows that emotional work and the personal can be tied intimately to issues of economics and politics.

This latter example of Eugen's work of advocacy marks a change in scale and audience. It involved a larger process of documentation including audio and video evidence to support the case for Romanian families seeking asylum in the US. With Eugen not having any particular training either in writing or in research practices, one might ask what the motivational tool is for this kind of work. There is no apparent gain unless we speak of *emotional* benefits. At first glance, this rhetoric of "help" inside and outside of the community through advocacy seemingly contradicts the economic frame of a broker. Help, particularly in ethnic communities, is rarely conceived in financial terms and often means doing a service, giving a ride, assisting with documents and papers, or aiding someone in finding a job. Yet this "help" is not necessarily without pay-offs. Indeed, if the broker is perceived in a reciprocal relationship with different parties at the same time, the payoff is invisible. However, if this brokering activity comes in exchange for having been helped in the past, for having experienced it, then the exchange happens diachronically. In doing so, the broker can certainly mediate current transactions, but often the motivation comes from identification with his or her past experiences.

In many ways, the broker embodies a Bakhtinian discursive identity, oriented both towards future actions and past experiences, and always carrying traces of the sociohistorical contexts s/he has inhabited. Eugen has certainly oriented his resources towards future actions, brokering not only the local immigrants' legal papers, but advocating for future engagement concerning unresolved cases of refugees. In discussing social knowledge that surrounds the texts drafted by scribes on the plaza, Kalman shows that these texts are connected to knowledge about future consequences of these texts and their circulation to various audiences. Similarly, Eugen is aware of the power of brokered texts. These texts serve multiple functions as stories of persecution of asylum seekers whose immediate purpose was to obtain legal passage into the US, but they also address a larger purpose—to bring awareness about the refugee situation and human rights violation in Romania.

To be engaged in such actions of advocacy requires more than knowledge of macrodiscourses, that is languages of countries and institutions; it requires intimate knowledge of those whose interests the literacy broker represents. The broker then holds a strategic position combining knowledge of small, particular details with larger discourses and structures. In this position, brokers can potentially leverage their experience, their emotional investments, and sometimes their official roles to compensate for unequal power relations particularly in transnational settings. A literacy broker in the context of immigration must have knowledge of larger discourses, the languages of religious institutions and political ideologies exercised by nation-states, and must learn to use this knowledge strategically. Such accumulated knowledge implicates the personal, the national, and the transnational. The personal, particularly in the case of refugees, is crucial, since one's own personal story of oppression constitutes the grounds for seeking asylum in the first place. But the personal must be framed relative to the national and transnational. Eugen, for instance, left Romania with

great difficulty after going through a painstaking process to obtain a passport to leave the country. The first step—filling out the application to request a passport—was in itself considered a form of subversion of the state. As mentioned earlier, Eugen was revoked citizenship and left the country with a brown passport—for shitheads, as Eugen relates in the interview; the Romanian state issued brown passports, passports of no citizenship, to people with whom it sought to sever all relations. Others were less fortunate. In a news report from 1983, Tamara Jones explains the distressful situation of several Romanians who against all odds were released passports, gave up Romanian citizenship, and were waiting to receive approval from the US immigration. In such situations, the personal intersects the national and transnational, and it is not only understood to be an expression of one's individual experience. Rather, it becomes political and inherently rhetorical. Micciche suggests that "the political turn in composition . . . has been slow to address the emotional contexts of teaching and learning" ("More" 435). In this study, the intersection of the political and the emotional become evident in the broker's engagement in advocacy but also in work with immigration forms and immigration agencies. This advocacy work by the broker breaks down dichotomies between emotional and rational and other forms of emotional exclusion in institutional contexts.

CONCLUSION

As the field of Literacy and Composition studies becomes more engaged in taking "the global turn" (Donahue; Hesford and Schell), the concept of literacy broker affords a significant analytical lens into questions of access and communication across borders, engaging differentially situated subjects. Literacy brokers as active agents of mediation work across difference in languages, cultures, and socio-political systems and structures. Understanding literacy brokers in more than one context provides a complex view of their dynamic roles and accumulated literacy practices. Most importantly, literacy brokers as shown in this study act not just in local communities, but in transnational communities, communicating within and across larger institutions, organizations, and nation-states. In doing so, as explained earlier, the personal matters as much as the national and transnational in shaping the literate experience. Questions about whether personal experience or personal-centered genres should or should not be included in the writing classroom are superfluous. A more appropriate approach to writing would underline the complexity of writing situations in real-world contexts and the rhetorical use of personal, national, and/or transnational experiences.

In this study, I have shown that as literacy brokers move from context to context, they acquire a bi-institutional perspective. It is this bi-institutional perspective that enables brokers to bridge literacy gaps through emotion work. This emotional work, or literacy as affinity, encompassing personal narratives, language of empathy, relations and partnerships built to support the literacy experience, intervenes in people's lives in memorable ways. In the process of transnational mobility and recontextualization, people experience loss—loss of familiar social contexts where one's literacy has developed, loss of language, or loss of culture. In this context, literacy as affinity can potentially

alleviate or even restore such dispossessions. A similar function is accomplished in institutional contexts that constrain the individual and manage feelings. In "More Than a Feeling," Micciche explains that "emotion has figured only minimally in accounts of student and teacher subject formation or classroom dynamics because it has not been thought of as having a social and political identity" (436). Literacy brokers' work of affinity shows that emotions have social and political dimensions, and I would add economic purchase as well. Thus, the brokers' emotional work in this study permeates all aspects of the social context, including the economic and political, and all of these challenge us to rethink ways in which individual literacies intersect larger socio-economic and political formations.[10]

NOTES

[1] I refer to languages of nation-states and institutions in the same way that John Duffy uses the term *rhetorics* to denote "languages of governments, schools, media"—general frames of language and discourse wherein the individual operates. The plural form of rhetorics is used to suggest more than "a single, coherent, all-unifying 'rhetoric'" (Duffy 15).

[2] Most Favored Nation (MFN) was an economic treatment given by the US to a particular state. The benefits emerging from this special status included special trade rates, with Romania exporting goods worth almost one billion dollars and importing about $300 million of American goods (Gwertzman).

[3] Participants in the study and archival documents, specifically newspapers clippings from the Gabanyi Collection (National Archives of Romania, see footnote 5), confirmed that the US was among the top choices for Romanian refugees. Many asylum seekers had either a distant relative or some connection in the US. Other destinations included Germany and Israel, where German and Jewish minorities chose to resettle.

[4] The change of name, from INS (Immigration and Naturalization Service) to CIS (Citizenship and Immigration Services), occurred in 2003 with the new restructuring of various offices and departments. Currently, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS)—established formally with the enactment of the Homeland Security Act in November 2002—includes three refashioned divisions: the CIS or USCIS, US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), and US Customs and Border Protection (CBP). Some of these units were formally included under INS.

[5] All the primary documents used in this essay are part of the Gabanyi collection, a special collection found at the National Archives in Bucharest, Romania, where I conducted archival work in the summer of 2011. Anneli Ute Gabanyi, a Romanian of German heritage, was a radio news editor for Radio Free Europe.

[6] "File self" is Julie Chu's term in reference to immigration documents that Chinese applicants compiled to build their cases for the US Consulate (132).

[7] In his book *On Institutional Thinking*, Hugh Heclo defines institutional thinking as "thinking from inside its thinking, living it from the inside out" (4). To say it more directly, thinking institutionally means "'thinking within' institutions."

[8] An anonymous reviewer of this manuscript has prompted me to make this clarification, for which I am thankful. S/he asked whether other terms—multi-institutional or trans-institutional could be equally used. I find these suggestions equally valuable, yet I found that using multi- rather than bi-institutional might detract from the depth of experience that the latter term suggests. Trans-institutional, in my opinion, captures the mobility between institutions fairly well, but the broker—as I conceive him/ her—already connotes a dynamic dimension.

[9] Archival documents from Radio Free Europe attest to the fact that the United States often pressured Romania to release a number of Jewish people, German minorities, and religiously-persecuted groups in exchange for a renewal of "Most Favored Nation" (MFN) status (Gwertzman).

[10] I would like to express my deepest gratitude to Catherine J. Prendergast who read multiple early versions of this article when ideas were just burgeoning. Her sustained feedback and support helped me refine my argument and overall work's contribution to literacy studies. Special thanks to Kate Vieira who encouraged me to further theorize the "bi-institutional." I would also like to acknowledge Anne Haas Dyson, Eileen Lagman, Cristian Mihut, and two anonymous reviewers for providing suggestions for improvement as well as questions for further inquiry. I owe much to my participants whose life histories I documented in this article. Their inspiring stories made all of this work worthwhile.

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Book Review *Shaping Language Policy in the U.S.: The Role of Composition Studies*, by Scott Wible

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Shaping Language Policy in the U.S.: The Role of Composition Studies, by Scott Wible. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP 2013. 204 pp.

> *During this present moment when various current national constituencies are "discovering" the importance of writing, let's make sure they understand what it means to teach writing and what learning and teaching environments best facilitate it. We have position statements that articulate those conditions. As language arts educators, we ought to be at the center of all policy decisions that affect the teaching and learning of communication skills. Somebody needs to ask* us *the next time decisions are made about how facility with language will be assessed. Somebody needs to ask* us *before proclaiming a national crisis in the quality of college student writing. And we need to have ready answers when they do.* (Shirley Wilson Logan, "Changing Missions, Shifting Positions, and Breaking Silences" 335)

Scott Wible's new book, *Shaping Language Policy in the U.S.: The Role of Composition Studies*, begins by invoking Shirley Wilson Logan's 2003 Chair's Address to the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC). When Logan affirmed the value of revisiting the CCCC's language policies, Wible's opening suggests, she was not only calling our attention to the importance of knowing composition's disciplinary history; she was calling us to the public work of rhetoric. Framing his inquiry as a response to Logan's challenge, Wible ably answers its appeal: to return to the CCCC's position statements, to notice how their words still inspire and guide, and to study the democratic principles each advances so that we might compose "ready answers" and participate in the ongoing policy debates about language diversity and educational reform in the U.S. In short, Wible rightly reads Logan's 2003 challenge as a rhetorical one, employing the implicit question it asks—What rhetorical means do the CCCC's language policies make available to us as composition scholars and teachers?—as the exigency for his historical analysis of two key CCCC position statements, the 1974 Students' Right to Their Own Language resolution and the 1988 National Language Policy, and later, as the context for his rhetorical analysis of the post-9/11 U.S. Department of Defense's national security language policy. The result is a meticulously researched and compelling argument for keeping these historical documents at the center of our present-day efforts to engage the public agenda on linguistic diversity and literacy education.

Shaping Language Policy in the U.S. is neatly arranged into five chapters that, together, illustrate how social, political, and economic forces have variously influenced U.S. attitudes about linguistic and cultural diversity since the 1970s, as well as how these perspectives have impacted educational reform and policymaking over time. As the title implies, Wible's main interest is to examine composition's influence in shaping U.S. language policy. However, the analytical approaches he employs—historical, rhetorical, and archival—to "tell the fuller story" (18) of the field's intervention in policy debates across four decades ultimately situate language policy analysis at the nexus between composition studies and literacy studies.

Beginning with an introductory chapter that defines the study's terms and traces the rich history of language policy analysis as a multidisciplinary endeavor, the book's three main chapters each focus separately on a specific language policy. Chapter 1, "The Language Curriculum Research Group: Translating the Students' Right to Their Own Language Resolution into Pedagogical Practice," addresses what Wible sees as the profession's continuing confusion about whether the 1974 CCCC position statement can, in fact, lead to pedagogical innovation and change, or if it is instead "a progressive theory divorced" from actual classroom practices (32). Chapter 2, "The CCCC National Language Policy: Reframing the Rhetoric of an English-Only United States," extends Wible's historical analysis to demonstrate how this 1988 position statement recast three themes dominating the era's political discourse—"individual initiative, communal responsibility, and national identity" (26)—to counter the English-only movement's logic and position the CCCC as an organization committed to civic leadership and action. Wible brings these two historical accounts to bear on a contemporary policy debate in Chapter 3, "The Defense Department's National Security Language Policy: Composing Local Responses to the United States' Critical Language Needs," to problematize the policy's instrumentalist goals for foreign language education in relation to national defense and to rally the field to develop an alternate policy that promotes multilingual education as a means of strengthening the nation domestically and abroad. In the final chapter, Wible offers seven fundamental ideas to guide future language policy work toward more socially just and inclusive ends.

Wible's investigation positions language policies as complex texts, rather than "stand-alone" documents, and thus his approach emphasizes the need for greater contextualization and for adopting what he calls a "long-term perspective" (175) to better understand their impetuses and outcomes. To achieve these aims, Wible draws deeply from an array of archived materials, recovering aspects of composition's history left largely unexplored to uncover the rhetorical strategies, pedagogical activities, and professional collaborations writing teachers and literacy scholars have employed to anticipate or respond to the language policy debates of their times.

For example, in Chapter 1, Wible challenges the perception that the CCCC's Students' Right resolution is "long on theory but short on practice" (4) by recounting the Brooklyn College-based Language Curriculum Research Group's (LCRG) efforts during the Open Admissions era to enact a culturally- and linguistically-responsive writing curriculum. Wible's recovery of the LCRG's pedagogical achievements, which included the creation of a textbook manuscript along with the development of teacher-training workshops, not only demonstrates how the "Students' Right ideal" (32) has been translated effectively into classroom practice but also clears the field's confusion about

whether this policy statement can yet inspire pedagogical innovations consonant with the goals for writing instruction today. Likewise, in Chapter 2, Wible's historical analysis of the CCCC's National Language Policy is infused with archival research. Tracing the CCCC's Language Policy Committee's (LPC) efforts to intervene in the English-only debate that marked the Reagan era, Wible's investigation clarifies the function of language policy statements as catalysts for change, both disciplinarily and within the wider public sphere. His argument for taking a long-term perspective on the outcomes of U.S. language policy debates is particularly apparent in this chapter. For while Wible allows that the 1988 National Language Policy did not provoke immediate change, his analysis reveals how the LPC's strategic use of outreach materials and activities—the creation of a policy brochure, the dissemination of letters and fact sheets to guide local responses to state-level legislative actions, and intentional networking with other language rights advocacy groups—gradually improved public perception of a multilingual America and its many achievements.

From Wible's careful rendering of these lesser known histories informing two key CCCC position statements, it is clear that writing teachers and literacy scholars have long been at the forefront of the nation's debates about linguistic diversity and language arts education. Mindful of the field's past strategies and successes, Wible reads the current debate about the need for a post-9/11 national security language policy as an opportunity to continue the public work of rhetoric. Like his predecessors, Wible's goal in Chapter 3 is not just to critique the Department of Defense's assumptions about "critical need" foreign language education as a means to redouble U.S. military power overseas, but also to assert composition's unflagging relevance in the policy debates, both nationally and locally, that seek to define the nation's language needs and thus influence educational reform. As in the past, the "ready answers" present-day compositionists might use to engage the conversations surrounding a national security language policy are ours to invent. On that front, and in our ongoing efforts to align more fully our research endeavors and teaching practices with the democratic principles our professional organization advances, *Shaping Language Policy in the U.S.* will surely lead the way.

Written primarily to professionals working in composition and rhetorical studies, Wible's broad-stroke arguments for reimagining higher education in ways that acknowledge, value, support, and sustain the language resources attending a culturally diverse society reach easily across disciplinary and educational settings. By situating the CCCC's position statements within the broader sociopolitical contexts and ideological questions that pressed their articulation—students' language rights in U.S. writing classrooms, U.S. minority and immigrant groups' language rights in an "English-Only" America, and the goals for foreign language education in the wake of 9/11—Wible not only makes the case for language policy as the link between composition and literacy studies but also demonstrates that such contexts and questions have always required concerted, cross-disciplinary response. The study itself, which weaves historical, rhetorical, and archival methodologies to frame critical analyses of three language policy debates, provides a graceful example of how these research practices can be productively applied to address real-world issues, a model for experienced scholars and newer graduate students alike. Working within the characteristic interdisciplinary traditions that ground both literacy studies and composition studies scholarship, *Shaping Language Policy in the U.S.* will

serve all language arts educators as a valuable source of information and insight for years to come.

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Book Review *New Literacy Narratives from an Urban University: Analyzing Stories About Reading, Writing, and Changing Technologies*, by Sally Chandler With Angela Castillo, Maureen Kadash, Molly D. Kenner, Lorena Ramirez, and Ryan J. Valdez

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New Literacy Narratives from an Urban University: Analyzing Stories About Reading, Writing, and Changing Technologies, by Sally Chandler with Angela Castillo, Maureen Kadash, Molly D. Kenner, Lorena Ramirez, and Ryan J. Valdez. New York: Hampton Press, 2013. 364 pp.

Several of the pieces in *LiCS*' inaugural issue warn against easy valorization of marginalized groups' community-based literate practices (Flannery; Horner; Parks; Trainor). Bruce Horner cautions that fetishizing these and digital literate practices re-instates the autonomous model of literacy critiqued by new literacy studies scholars. Such fetishization presumes that liberatory power inheres in these literacies. This fetishization fails to join marginalized groups in using literacy to transform inequitable social relations (Horner 5-6). Similarly, Kathryn Flannery affirms community-based literate practices but argues that compositionists must emphasize the value of academic literacies, as do Steve Parks and Jennifer Seibel Trainor.

However, Brian Street contends that recognizing the social character of literacies doesn't automatically re-instate the autonomous model. He recommends examining the contextually shaped, social nature of academic literacies and the challenges students face in acquiring them, because knowledge about them is often tacit. He notes that genre studies scholarship has begun to bridge literacy studies with composition studies (39-40), showing the significant extent to which "academic literacy" is field-specific. Allan Luke echoes Street by stressing that literacy studies approaches can help marginalized students work with linguistic and other differences in learning specific academic and digital literacies.

In the spirit of Luke's and Street's arguments, *New Literacy Narratives from an Urban University,* by literacy researcher Sally Chandler, with five student co-authors, suggests a composition pedagogy grounded in literacy studies. To do so, it showcases the hybrid, transitional genres advocated by Flannery, Horner, Parks, and Trainor.

The book analyzes the co-authors' literacy narratives for two larger purposes. First, it illuminates marginalized students' experiences of literacy acquisition, showing how political, economic, and social factors shape this process and how learners exert agency within it. Second, because its analyses are embedded in subsequent reflections and theoretical discussions, the co-authors show

how participatory action research (PAR) on literacy narratives reveals factors unrecognized by other methods and provides a compelling approach to literacy instruction.

These purposes coalesce in the book's central argument: that its version of PAR, which uses narrative theory to analyze literacy narratives, extends existing research methods for investigating new literacies and engages students in literacy learning (13). The book addresses literacy researchers and teachers, but Chandler explicitly positions it as targeting students, too, noting that because it "was envisioned as a teaching book," it includes long passages from co-authors' interview transcripts and reflections that "are meant to provide the kinds of detailed materials that can be used as practice data" (12). While some tension may result from speaking to such diverse audiences, that tension is ultimately productive. The book both affords a rich resource for post-secondary literacy instruction and raises provocative methodological questions for researchers.

By presenting and analyzing bits of Chandler's literacy narrative, Chapter One, "New Literacies, Story Forms, and Literacy Narratives: Theory and Practice," introduces students to key concepts in literacy studies and narrative analysis. By showing how Chandler's middle-class, rural background shaped her initial perceptions of her students, it explains concepts like the "literacy myth" and the socially constructed, ideological nature of literacy. It also examines an excerpt from a co-author's interview transcript to introduce key aspects of the research methods that the book enacts and teaches. Through a detailed description of these methods, Chapter Two, "Participatory Research and Active Interviewing," explains both the practices and the larger epistemological and ethical issues involved. By describing co-authors' modifications of existing PAR models to fit their goals and local constraints, it raises useful questions about PAR's understanding of social justice, particularly around questions of how researcher and participants jointly shape research goals. As its title suggests, Chapter Three focuses on "Narrative Analysis: Research Process, Concepts and Methods." Showing how co-authors analyzed their narratives, the chapter guides readers through research methods and highlights methodological issues, such as when to privilege examination of formal features and when to focus on interactive, contextual features.

The first of five chapters that each present one co-author's literacy narrative, Chapter Four, "Forbidden Visits to MiGente.Com," analyzes the surface stories and deeper themes in young adult student Lorena Ramirez' literacy experiences. It illustrates how Ramirez, the bilingual daughter of Colombian immigrants, achieves agency through narrative structures that enabled her to "analyze the meaning of experiences [so that] negative elements are recast in positive ways" (134). Chapter Five, "Reinventing Self: Story Forms and Literate Identity," presents literacy narratives by Molly Kenner, a returning adult African American student. It reveals an interplay between some narratives in which Kenner presents herself as successfully in control, during her primary and secondary education and in her personal use of technology, and others in which she presents herself as vulnerable, uncertain, and struggling, during her early attempts at higher education and in her use of technology in educational settings, "where she confronted literacies outside her current experience" (160). Kenner and Chandler suggest that reflective literacy narratives may illuminate hidden learning issues and help students negotiate the identity conflicts often connected to learning new literacies (165-6).

In Chapter Six, "Stories as Evidence of How Literate Identities Change and Grow," returning

adult student Maureen Kadash and Chandler illustrate the roles different narrative types play in identity (re)construction. Kadash and Chandler suggest that composition courses might help students use literate practices to (re)construct identity by integrating literacy narrative writing prompts with assignments that ask students to take part in documented conversations and to analyze both types of work. The potential value of analyzing one's own literacy narratives emerges further in Chapter Seven, "Making Room for Multiple Literacies." Co-author Ryan Valdez, a young adult master's student in English and the son of Filipino immigrants, uses such analyses to recognize how working-class literate practices led him both to devalue the digital literacies in which he excelled and to struggle with graduate work, despite his success as an undergraduate English major. Noting that students may need to address identity conflicts tied to literacy work more broadly, Valdez and Chandler argue that if digital natives are to import their online literate strategies into print literacies, they may need "new story structures to support changes that allow them to integrate these two conflicting ideologies" (227). The importance of such revised story structures is reinforced by Chapter Eight, "Online Selves and the Mediation of Identity Development," which illustrates young adult co-author Angela Castillo's negotiation of a Filipino and American cultures through her use of online spaces for adolescent identity development and the power of negative mainstream narratives to shape even literacy researchers' initial responses to teens' digital media use.

By examining the benefits the research process offered to all co-authors, Chapter Nine, "New Literacies Research and Collaborative, Reflective Narrative Analysis," highlights the book's potential relevance to graduate and undergraduate courses investigating literacy. While acknowledging that "increased awareness of language choices and narrative habits does not [automatically enable] students to step seamlessly into academic discourses" (300), the chapter stresses that such awareness can foster moments when small shifts in storytelling link to larger changes in literacy identities and when learners turn seemingly repressive dominant narratives to empowering ends. By extending literacy studies methods used by Deborah Brandt and by Cynthia Selfe and Gail Hawisher, New Literacy Narratives provides tools for writing instructors, particularly those teaching marginalized students. It suggests that teachers ask students to explore academic literacies as Street advocates by composing multi-layered texts through which writers not only construct but reflectively examine stories of learning and identity. This integration of narrative, reflection, and qualitative methods exemplifies the evolving, hybrid genres recommended by Flannery, Horner, Parks, and Trainor.

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INFORMATION FOR WRITERS

LiCS seeks submissions that interpret literacy at a time of radical transformation in its contexts and circulation. Please email submissions to licsjournal@gmail.com. Manuscripts (up to 10,000 words) should demonstrate awareness of relevant scholarship in both Literacy and Composition Studies and document sources according to MLA style (3rd ed.). To ensure anonymity during the review process, please eliminate any identifying information in the manuscript and attach a separate cover letter and ~200-word abstract. Manuscripts must not be previously published or under consideration elsewhere. Time from initial submission to publication decision is approximately 8 to 10 weeks.

If you have any questions, please contact us at licsjournal@gmail.com.

SYMPOSIUM CALL

LiCS welcomes submissions of short essays (between 1,000—5,000 words) that continue the symposium conversation begun in the inaugural issue. Manuscripts received before May 15 will be considered for the fall 2014 issue. Manuscripts received after May 15 will be considered for subsequent issues. Please email symposium submissions to licsjournal@gmail.com.

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